Talks by the Old Storekeeper

1920 7.50

Joseph. Pignata.

"He doesn't think of charging a credit sale until he's forgotten all about it."

TALKS BY THE OLD STOREKEEPER

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The Old Storekeeper talking with Barlow.

TALKS BY THE OLD STOREKEEPER

BY

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INTRODUCTION

As an introduction seems to be the thing to be put in the front of a book, I'll put in a short one in order to be orthodox. I don't expect any one to read it.

While I am not posing as a philanthropist, I will say that this book is not written for gold alone. I want to give every other merchant a chance to benefit by my experiences in store-keeping.

I have not been at it so very long, but in sixteen or seventeen years a man can make enough mistakes to teach him quite a few things and if you can profit by experiences without having to go through them, why isn't that a pretty good thing for you?

If I haven't put the real shop flavor in this book it won't be because I didn't have the chance I had to write it in the intervals of waiting on customers and some of the things the book says are pretty nearly right hot from the bat.

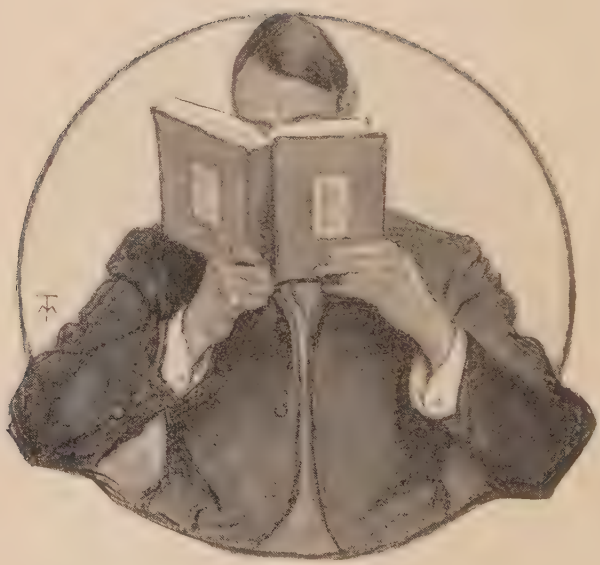
No man remembers all the lessons he learns, even those of the hard school of experience. As my experiences have not been particularly

unique they may cover much the same ground that your own do. In that case you should find here collected the very lessons that you have forgotten.

If any reader of this little book differs from me on the points I make, I'd be glad to hear his ideas. I'm looking for a chance to learn more, because the further into this shop-keeping business I get, the more there seems to be to learn.

Frank Farrington.

(Delhi, N. Y.)



FIRST TALK

(The Old Storekeeper, Tobias Jenkins, was one of the old school merchants who were the successful business men in the smaller towns about thirty years ago. He had conducted a general store for forty years in Hampton and had made enough money to keep himself and his family in his declining years. This done and being free from a mania for mere money making, he had sold out his business, that of dry goods and groceries, to young John Barlow, a clerk in a smaller store, who had been left enough money to start him going free from debts. Barlow hired an entirely new set of clerks, with one exception, and set out to run things on a modern basis. Though naturally capable and a good worker, he lacked experience in managing and made mistakes galore which rather tickled the Old Storekeeper who used to drop in frequently for a chat and a chance to rub it into his successor. The chats developed a good deal of interesting material which together with some outside conversations have been collected in these Talks.)

If there is any time when business will be dull in a retail store, especially in a country town, it is in the middle of the afternoon on a winter day when the rainy stage of a February thaw is in progress.

On one such day, when the rain was beating against the windows, when the snowy streets were quagmires of slush and the choking gutters were making ponds of the sidewalks, the Old Storekeeper opened the door as a particularly wet gust of rain whipped across the store front, and came in with the same fresh, brisk air that he would have shown on a crisp October morning with the sunshiny street full of people.

Henry Bilow, the clerk who had at the time of his selling out, been longest in his employ and the only one of the force that the old gentleman recommended Barlow to keep, could have told you that Tobias Jenkins was a man who was always cheerful. He might at times be serious and no one could be more serious in the discussion of serious subjects, but he was never doleful.

As he entered the store, Barlow, who sat back in the raised and partitioned off space that he'd made for an office, greeted him almost cheerfully, forgetting a glumness which was perhaps natural in a man trying to start off his business

with a boom and a big white goods sale, and the weather so bad that not a woman was on the street in all day.

Even the clerks who were indolently trying to be just busy enough so that they would not be set at some real work, braced up and returned the Old Storekeeper's salutation in a way that showed that they were glad that he had come.

Such is the personality of some men that they are always welcomed at a time when the gloomy element in nature predominates. Such was the personality of Tobias Jenkins; sometimes a little bluff, generally plain-spoken, rarely failing in judgment, always cheerful.

As he walked back through the store, turning aside from the grocery department, and finally taking a seat near Barlow's desk, the store grew perceptibly brighter in atmosphere though there was no abatement of the storm outside.

"Well, John, there doesn't seem to be any great rush of business this afternoon. I guess the boy that went out for grocery orders this morning did more business than any of the rest of you have done to-day."

Barlow suggested that it was hardly to be expected that white goods or any other goods

would sell when there wasn't a soul on the street to buy them.

"Well, now," said the old gentleman, "seems to me you were going to run this store in a bran new way. I remember some sort of a song and dance about there not being any need of having dull times in a store if the storekeeper was on to his job. Don't you suppose you forgot something in getting ready for this big opening of yours? Did you advertise it hard enough? Maybe you didn't get your prices down as low as they ought to be. I hate to see my successor fall down on his first try,—especially after taking a correspondence school course in how to be a big business getter."

All this was said in a bantering tone and was received with a smile that showed plainly enough that to Barlow this form of teasing was no new thing and that it created no ill feeling.

As a matter of fact Barlow had had a big opening a few days before. He had closed up the store for a week and had billed the country far and wide, using half sheet posters to exploit his complete stock, his modern methods and the low prices under the new management. He had intimated that the store had hitherto been conducted upon too conservative lines and that his change of policy would make a modern store of it.

All that was in a way a rebuke to the Old Storekeeper who had never advertised to any great extent and had never had special sales, but had been very popular and had made money. Naturally he lost few opportunities for joking his successor about anything that could be construed to look like a failure of his new notions.

"Did you use to have any ways for making days like this profitable?" asked Barlow.

"Did I?" Tobias exclaimed. "Rainy days were my busy days. I'd just sit down at my desk here where you've got this fancy piazza built and I'd write all the letters that had to be written that week. Then I'd make out checks and discount all the bills that I could—that's the way to make money—and the next day when the weather was good and business picked up, I wouldn't have anything to keep me from waiting on customers.

"And that reminds me that I never was much of a hand to stand around in good clothes and boss things. Gosh! you wouldn't wear to a dog fight the clothes I used to wear. When a customer came in I didn't turn him over to some clerk to wait on. No, sir. I waited on just as many customers myself as I could and do the managing part too.

"Say, I was better at waiting on customers than any clerk I ever had. The best clerk you get can't wait on as many customers and do it as well as the boss. Well, that's putting it pretty strong, but you know what I mean; the boys will loaf even in a rush time. The boss knows that he can't afford to. He has an incentive the clerks don't have.

"You can just make up your mind anyway that people like to see the boss around. It doesn't make any difference how good clerks you may have, if you are running a store, it will pay you to let your customers see that you see them there. Lots of them run stores themselves and they want you to know that they are giving you their patronage.

"Talking about rainy days though; gee whiz! how my clerks hated stormy weather. Then I'd get my money's worth out of them. I didn't have any private office where I could get out of sight, and when I'd see them standing around feeling so bad at having nothing to do, I'd be bound to get them busy at something.

"Henry, there, can tell you how it was. He used to hang back a little at times, but when I once got him started he certainly was a good worker. That's the trouble though with about half the good workers. You have to stir 'em

up every morning with a sharp stick to get 'em going."

Turning to Barlow, Tobias continued:

"They're like the old sorrel pacer that Bob Mulford used to bring over from Slab Hill every fall to the county fair trot. Go? That horse could go rings around anything else in the county but he wouldn't start. Bob fooled with him two years and made himself the laughing stock of the crowd. Then the third year when he came back they thought he was crazy but he wasn't. He just brought out his horse when they called the race and set him down, sulky and all, right under the wire. The rest all scored up and came down the stretch ready for a start. Bob pulled out a long forked stick and gave the sorrel two hard jabs with it just as the bunch went by him. The sorrel jumped about a rod and was off. He went by the rest as if they were standing still. He won the heat and in spite of protests by the other drivers he was allowed to score up in his own way for the other heats and won the race hands down.

"That was all right in its way but that horse was like lots of clerks. If you get 'em started, they go like the wind. Next time you have to start 'em again same way. In the long run I don't know but old Jog Trot is a better horse."

Barlow laughed at the story and said that he had an idea that the fellow who kept hunching along was a good man but he could never be in the same class with the other when the other did get started and sometimes that other got over being hard to start.

The Old Storekeeper stuck to his point though and it ended by Barlow asking him into the drug store next door to have a cigar and leave it to the druggist. As far as I know, the decision must have been reserved for I never heard either Barlow or the old gentleman refer to the matter again.

SECOND TALK

Almost anyone can preach. It doesn't take much brains to give the other fellow a lot of dry, technical advice.

But when it comes to telling a man how to do things so that he will feel impelled to go ahead and do them, that's different. That means that you have to talk to him about what to do in a way that shows you are acquainted with the practical side of the doing, that you have done it yourself and know what you are talking about.

Probably this last way is preaching too, but we refer to advice as "preachy" when it is inclined to be based on the theories of someone who doesn't know anything about it, rather than upon the knowledge of the actual worker.

The Old Storekeeper was a good deal of a preacher, but he was anything but a "preachy" preacher. He was practical or nothing. He didn't try to tell Barlow or anyone else anything that he didn't KNOW was true.

That afternoon when he and the younger man went out for a cigar, he was led by the appearance of the drug store they entered to talk about store arrangement. As they came out, he said:

"Now, what do you think of a store like that, John? How can it pay expenses?"

"Are you sure it does?" Barlow asked.

"Oh, yes. Morrison has been making a little more than a living there for a long time but he's been doing it in spite of his methods, not on account of them. You'll find it's true in storekeeping, and in a whole lot of other things too, that there isn't any rule that works out much better than that which calls for a place for everything and everything in that place."

"It's pretty hard to tell sometimes just what is the right place," interrupted Barlow.

"Of course it is—for some folks," said Tobias sharply. "If a man hasn't got horse sense, he'd better leave horses alone. If he hasn't got store sense and doesn't know where things in a store belong, he'd better get into something that's nearer the size of his brain power. If a man's any kind of a merchant though, he won't have much trouble in getting along if he does the best he knows. You'll find mighty few failures amongst the chaps who do their very best.

"I used to spend quite a little time studying this right thing in the right place business. In the first place I took pains to have a right place for things. I planned to have a spot where each tool used in the store belonged and as far as I

could I had that place located where it would be easiest to get the article when it was wanted. I didn't keep a yard stick hung up next to the canned goods shelves. I kept it next to the goods I'd be wanting to measure oftenest with it. It saved a lot of time to follow that plan.

"You can go into almost any store and find tools being kept the whole length of the store from the place they are generally wanted. They don't know why they do it only that 'That's the place where it always was kept' and no one ever thinks of making a change.

"You think that this is an up to date age. Why, there's more people doing business on an old fogy basis today than there ever were before. Of course they aren't the big fellows. They are the little stores, but the woods are full of them. You may go into any town and find these little stores that stay little ones just because they are run on the same plan my grandfather ran his shop on 'way back when Adam was a boy."

"Yes," said Barlow, "I know the kind of a store you mean. That little shanty store over on Park street is one, and Dennis McCarthy's 'department store' as he calls it, all in one room, about seven by nine."

"Well, you're part right and part wrong, John," the Old Storekeeper continued. "I

mean mostly the neighborhood stores that never branch out and get to be anything else. Maybe the men who run them haven't got it in them to be merchants, but I have an idea that almost any man that runs a store, if he knows cheese from sauerkraut, knows, for instance, that you don't want to put a cigar case right between two cases of goods for the women customers.

"There's a place in almost any store where some goods would sell better than others. If you've got a nice line of candy in bulk, you don't want it way back in the dark where no one would see it unless they asked for it. Take a thing like a case of candy that makes your mouth water to see it; you want it right where everyone who comes in will get a dig in the appetite.

"Plenty of people come into any store ready to be tempted to buy something. The things that will tempt the most people ought to be kept where the most people will see them. Of course some people will be tempted to buy things that they can't afford and that's a bad thing because nobody ought to spend money that's needed at home, but you can't be expected to take care of anybody's economy but your own. Anyway, you won't be held responsible for tempting people to buy anything that's as harmless as the bargains in most stores are apt to be.

"You've got goods right in your store that you'd have hard work to get rid of if you used all that big advertising space of yours on them for weeks. Some will move right off if you put them up front where everyone coming in would have to look at them. Then other goods might as well go back in the darkest corner because it's the advertising that's going to sell them and nobody would think of buying them just because they were put out on exhibition.

"I always went on the plan that it's a mighty good thing to get people who come into the store just looking, to linger long enough to get interested in something and forget what a hurry they were in. If you can show up a few lines of goods right out in front that will contain something to interest everybody, then you're pretty sure to get a nibble on them from anyone who isn't near-sighted, and a little talking will get a near-sighted customer interested.

"You don't have any cashier in your store. Well, I didn't either, but it was because I couldn't afford it. I didn't have any private office either and so you might say I was my own cashier; but you probably know what you're about. Anyway, what I was going to say was that where you have a cashier's desk that customers have to visit a good deal, next to that desk is a good

place to put goods that you want seen. Then, where you wrap up people's parcels right before their eyes while they wait, it's natural for them to kind of edge along to where you are doing up the goods so they'll get them sooner. I always had a display of some line that I was anxious to get moving, right next to where we wrapped up packages. Then when I was tying up something for someone, if they showed any interest in that display, I'd help them along a little by taking longer to tie up the bundle. If they didn't seem to notice the goods, it came very natural to call attention to them then.

"Say, talk about a place for everything and everything in its place, I was in the slickest drug store the other day that you ever saw. It was new and as clean as a whistle. Well sir, there was an elegant row of show cases all down both sides and across the end and they shone like a nigger's heel and you couldn't see a speck of dirt anywhere. There wasn't a thing out of place. There was a place for everything and every blamed thing was right in it, fair and square, not an eighth of an inch out of the way.

"You'd think, to judge from my text, that I'd be just exactly suited there, wouldn't you? Well, it did look nice I admit. But it didn't suit me a bit. Of course if the object of that

"If you don't have the goods you can't sell 'em."

druggist was to keep his goods nice and clean and his store clean too, he was all right, but if he was out to sell the goods he was all wrong.

"I don't believe that he'll ever have his store dirtied up much with customers if he continues to keep everything locked up like that. Why, it looks as if he expected every man who comes in to be a shoplifter.

"You can sell a lot of goods by advertising and probably you could make a success of a store like that mustn't-touch-it drug store, but if a man's going to make a big success, he's got to pull every string, and one of the strings that pays best is to have certain lines of goods out where the public can handle them and steal them if they want to. You must take some chances.

"Did you ever go into Tabitha Primrose's parlor?"

"Yes," said Barlow. "I had to go there once to see her about a silk dress she bought that all cracked apart."

"Well, then you know just what kind of a store that one is that I was in. Tabitha is a nice lady and I used to know her mother well, but she's so darned particular and so persnickity that it's a blessing she never got married. She saved some good man from a terrible life. Why, if one chair in that parlor should get a sixteenth

of an inch out of position, or if one of those lace curtains should hang the least bit on the bias, I wouldn't be responsible for Tabitha's sanity.

"You've got to run a store so that people will feel at home there. If you make them feel as soon as they come in that they have got to talk in whispers and keep their hands off from everything, they'll buy what they have to buy there and get out as fast as their legs will carry them.

" 'Everything in its place' doesn't mean everything fixed just so prim and precise that it gives you a pain. The right place for a good many goods is not put away where you have to open a door to find them, and where a customer can't get at them at all. Of course there are lots of goods that you could put out on top of the show cases and make them sell that way, but they would get soiled easily. Such goods you have to leave out a little while at once. Change the stock around; the oftener the better.

"I don't mean to keep you standing out here in the cold all the afternoon. Run along in and see if you've got a customer. Get the boys busy at something anyway. I've got to go down to Joe Donnelly's. I'll be in again sometime before the robins nest again."

THIRD TALK

The coldest weather in our climate usually comes in February and while the ice harvesters chuckle and the coal dealers laugh in their sleeves, the poor merchant wishes the weather would moderate a bit so that people could get out to spend their money.

People do not grow up nowadays with the rugged disregard of weather that their fathers felt. We are becoming a generation of heat worshippers and find our greatest delight in cold weather in sitting around a cheerless steam radiator or a hole in the floor while vitality oozes out at every pore.

Tobias Jenkins was of another sort and a zero day only served to make him feel younger and more energetic. It put added briskness into his gait and jubilance into his spirits.

Under these conditions it is no wonder that he looked a little disgusted when he came into Barlow's at ten o'clock one morning to find the proprietor not yet down and the boys all hovering around the radiator, shivering and wishing it would come spring.

"Hello boys! Great weather this! What's the matter with you all anyway? You look as if somebody had come along and bled every blamed one of you. You're as blue as a bunch of whetstones."

"Why, this is the coldest morning this winter," said Bilow. "Haven't you looked at the thermometer yet? Ours went down to twenty-eight below."

"What do I want to look at a thermometer for? A fellow isn't any colder than he feels, no matter what the thermometer says. You fellows will know how to keep warm better when you've had a course in wood-chopping. You can't get warm around a fire, not so you'll stay warm. Get out and hustle around a little. I've walked 'way up to the mills and back already this morning."

"That's all right," said one of the clerks, "but you don't have anything else to do. We have to keep warm by the fire because we can't get out and chop wood."

"Now, George, don't let that make you feel bad a minute," said Tobias in return. "I'll just tell Barlow to let you have the job of breaking up a pile of boxes out back of the store this afternoon. He don't know how badly you want to get out and hustle around. I have an idea

that maybe a man could get up motion enough right in here moving stock around and cleaning things up, to keep warm. What's the matter with changing that east window? That display has been in there about long enough."

The clerks were used to the bantering of the Old Storekeeper and though his was a case of many a true word spoken in jest, yet they all liked him and took his advice good naturedly.

George replied to his inquiry regarding the window by saying that he had been intending to fix that window this very morning if it hadn't been so cold.

"Young man," said Tobias, "the statement that Hell is paved with good intentions may be a little strong, but I'll give you a tip that no man ever walked to success over a path paved with them.

"Now, if you were going to dress that window this morning, you go right ahead and do it and I won't interrupt you any longer. Where's the boss? Is he afraid to come out in the cold? If he doesn't show up pretty soon, I'll buy a lot of cotton batting of you and send it up for him to roll up in to keep warm. George, you are the regular window dresser of this store now, aren't you?"

"I suppose I am," assented George.

"Well, do you take any pains to study up your line of work so that you will be worth more money next year than you are now?"

"Oh, I think I keep learning something all the time."

"That isn't putting it very strong. You probably don't realize what a good thing it is to be a first class window dresser. Of course you have a good deal else to do, but you have the chance to make just as good window displays here as there is any need of. Barlow told me that he had placed it all in your hands. You ought to make a regular study of the thing. Perhaps you don't care whether you get to be a good window dresser or not, but a fellow who does any kind of work without caring whether he does it well or not, or whether he improves on it every time he does it, will not get very far. You may think I'm an old fogy, but I've got some ideas that are pretty near up to the times because there are a whole lot of principles that haven't changed since the time of the flood.

"If you like to dress windows, the thing for you to do is to get hold of everything you can find about window displays and read it up. See what the biggest stores are doing in that line. Keep a scrap book of all kinds of window display talk and pictures of windows. Make a regular

fad of it. Think about it all the time you are awake and dream about it if you want to, when you are asleep. I'll get Barlow to let you go to New York some day to study the windows there for a couple of days. He'd be foolish if he wouldn't pay the expenses of a man who was that anxious to get to be a better workman—but, by jing! you haven't showed enough ambition to entitle you to any free trips yet.

"Advertising is an awfully good thing and it is a great money maker they say. I got out of the store just about the time newspaper advertising got to being popular, but I was onto the value of window exhibits though. I kept them changing often enough so that there was always something new for people to look at."

Stirred by the Old Storekeeper's remarks, George began to take an interest in the subject and responded:

"Well, I guess I will change that window right now. It's clean and I'll get up a new display there right away. We've been having a good deal of call for pudding dishes lately—those cheap ones, you know. I'll put a big pile of them right in the middle and mark them 'Pudding dishes, 10c. each.'"

"That wouldn't be a hard window to dress, would it?" asked Tobias.

"Don't you think that would be a good scheme?" George protested.

"Yes," assented the older man, "if you couldn't think of anything better, that would do very well. It's a good time to put those pudding dishes in, but what's the advantage in putting goods into a window so that they will show at their worst? Even in cheap and simple things like pudding dishes, it ought to pay to make them show up to the very best advantage. I should say that the poorer and cheaper the goods, the more pains ought to be taken to make them look better.

"If you want to attract the women's attention to those dishes, why don't you spend an hour in making them look worth while? Suppose you'd put a neat card at the back of the window, raised up pretty well, and let that card read 'Pudding Pans, 11c.' Then cut out some strips of red crepe paper and attach one end of each to the card, around the bottom and the two sides, then run these strips one each to the pudding pans that you have arranged around the window in front of the card. The idea is to have the card as a center and the red strips radiating from it to the pudding pans.

"I'll bet that if you do it that way, you will sell more pudding pans at eleven cents than

you'd sell pudding 'dishes' at ten cents. It pays to take pains with the little things."

While Tobias was talking along this strain, George was taking the goods out of the window and when he had it about empty and stopped to look out for a minute, the Old Storekeeper said:

"Seen dirtier windows than that, haven't you?"

"Yes,' said George. "I think that will do well enough."

"Well enough never made a very good job of anything as far as I've noticed, young fellow. That window isn't so very bad just now, but it's just about ready to look pretty dingy. Another day will fix it and then you'll have a fresh window display in a dirty window. What's the boss going to think of that way of taking care of things?"

"Oh, he won't notice that. You see this window is on the side where not many people see it anyway."

"Are you that kind of a workman? Don't you care anything about how a job looks just for the sake of being satisfied with your work? I'd just like to talk to you a minute," and Tobias took the boy by the arm and led him over into a corner.

This was done good naturedly and amidst

the chaffing of the other clerks, but the old man was serious underneath it all. He was used to handling clerks and knew how to talk things over with a man and not get the man's ill will. Of course he was possessed of no authority in the store, but he knew all the men there and took pains to help them to make the most of themselves, having Barlow's permission to boss them around if he wanted to, though he never took advantage of his privilege.

"Now, look here," he said to George, when he had that youth by himself. "Stop your chuckling because I'm going to be serious now and I'll do you some good if you'll give me the chance. You're not a fool by any means. You've climbed over fool's hill, or you ought to have by this time for you are of age. Now it's up to you to see how much you can make of yourself.

"You think you're nothing but a clerk and it doesn't make much difference what you do or how you do things because you couldn't ever be much more in this store, anyway. Maybe it's true that you won't have a chance to get rich right here, or to get a salary that will put you on Easy street. Suppose that is so, what has that got to do with it? You are just a man in the making yet. It takes all of thirty years to make a real man, and sometimes that won't do it.

"You've got to make up your mind right now, before I let you go, that you want to succeed and WILL succeed. You're just the age when a fellow turns into a chuckle head, or a paper sport, or decides to get busy and be something. Now you just make up your mind that no fellow who does things "good enough," or who slights his job because the boss isn't going to know it, will ever know what it is to be boss himself. You've got to grow a liking for doing things well because that's the only way to do them. A man who is satisfied with anything less than the very best will never get anywhere near the best. You can't afford to do things half way because unless you get into the habit of doing them right, you will never do them so. Do things the best you can just because you've got to get into the habit of doing them so. Take pains when you do a thing to do it right, and don't soldier at it, either. Don't think because you've done some one thing pretty well this morning that that lets you off from doing anything more all day. You've got to hustle for the next twenty years in a way that you haven't realized yet.

"There isn't any let up for the man who wants to get to the top. The top is a pretty good way up and it's pretty hard climbing. Now, I'm going to keep a little watch of you, George, and

see if you've got it in you to make good. If you have, maybe I can be of some service to you AFTER you've proved that you are made of the right stuff."

"You're right, as usual," said George. "I suppose I haven't tried very hard, but you know a fellow gets to letting things slip, and he doesn't see any great chance ahead that makes him want to work and first thing he knows he doesn't care how he gets along. I'll go and wash that window inside and then I'll dress it up the way you spoke of, and when you come along this afternoon if I haven't got it as clean as it could be made, and dressed so that it will stop every woman that sees it, you just go out and throw a stone through it at my expense."

"That's the way I like to hear a fellow talk," Tobias responded, enthusiastically, as he shook the boy's hand.

As they walked back, one of the other clerks asked facetiously:

"Now will you be good, Georgie?"

"I don't want to hear a word from you boys, or I'll have to have a heart to heart talk with you. If you knew what I've been telling George, you'd be willing to pay a hundred dollars to have me tell you all the same. You would if you were wise. I've given him a tip that ought to make him the best window dresser

in the county. It will if he follows my advice.

"I know what you all think. You think that it's easy enough to give good advice and tell someone else how to do things, but it's very different when it comes to doing them. That's right too. Anybody can give advice but it takes a mighty good man to live up to it. That doesn't make the advice any less valuable though, does it? Not if you want to be the 'mighty good man.' Of course if you're satisfied to be a potato and never do anything but lie there in the dirt, that's the easiest way. If you are going to get very far, you'll have to follow somebody's good advice whether you want to or not.

"I can't fool around here all day talking to you boys. I don't believe you're going to have any customers this forenoon. I must be a Jonah. Only three people have been in since I came. I'll make my escape and give the business a show. If the boss gets around before I come in again, tell him that a gentleman called to see him. He won't know who it was then."

"Did he call you down?" Bilow asked George after the old man went out.

"No," answered that youth thoughtfully. "He woke me up."

FOURTH TALK

On the afternoon of the day in which the previous Talk occurred, at about three o'clock, the old Storekeeper came in just as George was taking an admiring look at the results of his work on the pudding pan window.

Tobias saw the pride in the youth's eyes and saw that he had at last felt enough interest in his work to want to do it well and to be proud of it when he had done it well. That was sufficient evidence to show him that his talk had already borne fruit, though he was wise enough to know that it's easier to take a brace under the stimulus of someone's energetic encouragement than it is to keep it after the novelty of the resolution has died out.

"Now that's what I call the best pudding pan window I ever saw," he said as he came in. "I just walked down town with my daughter and she isn't much on the cooking herself, but I'll be blamed if she didn't insist upon stopping to look at those pans and told me I'd have to buy two and bring them home. That's what I call hard luck—to get you to raise the price up

to eleven cents, then get ordered to buy at the advanced rate when they never thought of telling me to buy pudding pans before. Don't I get a rake-off on this deal?"

"You'll have to talk to Mr. Barlow about that," said George with great dignity. "We are not allowed to cut prices to anyone without permission from headquarters."

"Well, I can't take any exception to that rule. I called here this morning and the boss was not in. Perhaps he is here now, or doesn't he get down until evening?"

This last was asked in a louder voice to give Barlow the benefit of it where he sat, back in the office.

"What's that you were asking, Mr. Jenkins?" inquired Barlow, rising from his chair and looking over the railing that separated the office from the rest of the store.

"Oh, excuse me," apologized the Old Storekeeper with mock humility. "I wouldn't have said that if I'd known you were here. Of course I know that you do get down by two or three o'clock—most days."

"Yes, I guess I do. I'm here by eight every morning. This morning it was pretty cold and I had a lot of advertisements to write and I

just stayed right in my room and worked on them instead of coming down here."

"I guess that explanation will have to be accepted. What kind of advertising are you doing now that takes so much work?"

"Oh, the same old kind. It takes time to write newspaper ads. A man can't sit right down and dash them off any more than he could a story."

"No," said Tobias, "a man can't dash anything off and do it very well. It takes time and pains to do things right. I gave one of the boys a little talk on that this morning."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Barlow, gratefully. "I notice that you seem to be able to get more ginger into my clerks in one minute of telling them things than I can in a month. What do you suppose is the reason for that?"

"Well," the Old Storekeeper answered, "I don't know as I can explain it. I don't claim to have any special ability along that line. It was always pretty easy for me to get on with clerks and I have an idea that it was due to my putting myself in their place when I talked to them about how not to do things.

"I never was much of a hand to jump on a chap rough shod without giving him a show. I served too long a time behind the counter

myself not to know how it feels to be walked on. One of the first clerks I ever had taught me a pretty good lesson and I never forgot it. It was when I first bought this store and before I knew a whole lot about business—or about anything, for that matter.

"This lad was a hard worker and always right on time. He wasn't as much of a salesman as some, but taken altogether, he was a good deal above the average. He was quick tempered, and so was I in those days. I hadn't learned yet to control my anger, and when things went wrong I'd generally get hot under the collar and want to abuse someone.

"I didn't keep any other clerk then. The two of us ran the store and it was nip and tuck a good deal of the time, especially just before I found I'd have to get another man. It was all the two of us could do to keep everything done.

"The store was more like a general store then and we sold molasses, kerosene oil and a lot of such things in bulk right out of the barrels. The store didn't run 'way back and there was a little back room where we kept all these barreled things. One afternoon we were alone and a woman came in and bought quite a lot of little things of the boy. Jack was his name.

He wrapped up the goods and she went out, but not until I had a customer to wait on.

"While I was waiting on my customer Jack went into the little back room and when the door opened and three or four people came in he didn't come out to wait on them or to see what they wanted. I fidgeted a few minutes and finally called, 'Jack!' He said 'Yes, sir,' but still he didn't come out. I called again, 'Jack, come out here,' and I said it pretty sharp, for I was mad all of a sudden. I couldn't see any sense in him taking so long.

"He came out then and waited on the people who were in and took up others who came in. It was fifteen minutes before I was at liberty and he was still busy. I walked along by the door of the back room and as I glanced in I saw the molasses turned on full stream and running on the floor. There was a jug under the spigot, but it was full and the floor was covered. That little room was a sight. I'll never forget it. You couldn't have gone into the room because the molasses was about an inch deep everywhere, and there sat the store cat on the other side of the room on a small box where she would stick her paw down into the liquid every few minutes and then pull it up and mew pitifully. She wouldn't wade in the stuff.

"I was boiling over with mad. I couldn't speak. I didn't dare to go out where Jack was busy for fear of making a scene before a storeful of customers. I ran out back and got a bit of plank and brought it in and laid it down so that I could get to the molasses barrel. Then I stepped in on the plank and got down to shut off the spigot. It wouldn't turn. It was caught in some way. I twisted and tugged and all the while the good molasses was running out on the floor. I got red in the face I suppose and swore a little under my breath, for I couldn't do a thing. Finally I gave one tremendous pull at the spigot and the plank slipped on the molasses, the barrel rolled off from its support at the end next the wall and I went flat on my back in the molasses on the floor.

"Yes, you can laugh if you want to. I can laugh now myself, but it wasn't very funny for me then. I hadn't had time to move when Jack appeared at the door. That was the climax.

"But would you believe it, that boy never cracked a smile. He stepped in and took my hand and helped me up and set the barrel on end, then he took the full jug and carried it out to clean up for the woman who'd ordered it. The whole thing came to me then. Jack had been working at that spigot, trying to shut it off

when I had gone off the handle and ordered him to leave it.

"After that I never lost my temper with a clerk, or got out of patience with one for not doing things, unless I knew to a dead certainty that I was on the right side. My, my! but I was a sight that day."

"I'd give five dollars to have seen that show," said Barlow.

"It would have been the best five dollars worth you ever bought, I'll tell you that. It's a pretty good plan for a man to think twice before he goes off the handle whether he's mad at a clerk or someone else.

"If you get mad at a man once, it's pretty hard to get him back where he was before. He's likely to keep a grudge against you in his mind and you can't afford to keep a clerk with a grudge against the house. A clerk who sort o' feels that he's got something coming will just as likely as not decide to collect from the money drawer when you aren't looking.

"If I was in business today and got mad at a man and called him down without giving him a show, I'd bounce him tomorrow because he would never be ready again to give me a square deal. You can't expect a clerk to be pleased over any kind of a rebuke, and unless you get

him to admit first that he's in the wrong, you're pretty apt to send him away with the notion that he's been misused."

"I am not in the habit of losing my temper," said Barlow, "but I don't want to get into an argument with a man who has wronged me, or who has made an inexcusable mistake. I know what is right and if a man violates the rules I make for him, then I'm going to call him down, and if he doesn't like it he can leave."

"That's all right and it sounds logical, but you know it isn't every man who wants to leave right off like that. He may be short of money and probably he hasn't a job waiting for him. He has to swallow his pride and remain in your store until he gets something else. In the meantime, he's a damage to you and an expense.

"I think the trouble with you is that you go at a man from your own point of view, rather than from his. Of course your interests are the most important to you and you are looking out for yourself, but at the same time you'll find it pays to consider clerks and their shortcomings from their point of view just as a matter of policy. When you put yourself in the clerk's place and look at a thing through his eyes for a few minutes before condemning his actions,

you find a good many times that he did the natural thing after all.

"You'll get a man to see things your way a good deal quicker by being friendly over it than you ever will by holding him off at arm's length and shaking him and hollering 'Now, will you be good?' "

"I'm convinced," said Barlow grudgingly, "but it's against my better judgment."

"A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still," said Tobias. "I can't stay to stand up for your clerks any longer. I'll leave them to their fate. Now I'm going to buy a couple of pie pans because I got your window dresser to get up such a good window for them that Mary has ordered me to buy some."

"Come in again, Mr. Jenkins. I'll have to get posted upon my side of some of these questions so that I can argue them better."

"Oh, don't mind me. I don't claim that my ideas are infallible. I'm open to argument any time and if I'm wrong, you can't prove it too soon. Good day!"

FIFTH TALK

"Come on and take dinner with me, Mr. Jenkins," said Barlow one day as he was going into the hotel at noon.

"I'll just go you," said the Old Storekeeper heartily. "I was going right in there anyway. My wife and family are out of town for a couple of days and I have to kind o' hitch along any old way I can."

They went into the hotel office first, down three or four steps in a semi-basement and after washing, and hanging their coats in a dark little coat room, they climbed the creaky stairs to the next floor where the dining room occupied one side of the building from the parlor back to the kitchen.

The room was cheerful, well lighted and well filled with a mixture of farmers, merchants with their wives, and homeless young men whose incomes were not yet sufficient to enable them to marry, or who, like Barlow, had not yet found a right girl who seemed to agree with them on the subject.

Barlow had a regular seat and he took Tobias right to his table.

"Vermicelli soup?" asked the trim little waitress in white.

"Yes," said Tobias.

"Vermicelli soup?" she asked again.

"Please," said Barlow.

"Well, does this run of sleighing bring the farmers in pretty generally?" asked the Old Storekeeper.

"Yes, they have been driving in from all around since the weather moderated a little. I've been sending them quite a lot of circular advertising matter lately and we have had good results from it. I think it has brought a good many people here who would otherwise have traded a little nearer where they live."

"You're a pretty good thing to have in town then, aren't you?"

"Roast beef, roast pork and fricasseed veal," interrupted the girl.

"I'll have some veal and a cup of coffee," said Barlow. "Oh, I don't pose as a philanthropist, but I do think that if this town had a few more business men who wanted business enough to go after it instead of simply wishing for it, it would be a good thing."

"That's so, that's so," assented the older man.

"I'll tell you though what's almost as important; there aren't more than five merchants in Hampton who know enough to take care of trade when they once get it coming their way. It may be they know enough, but they are too lazy or something. They don't seem to care enough about holding their customers, to treat them white.

"I went into a store on this street yesterday and when I went in there wasn't a soul to be seen. I stood around for five minutes by the watch and finally I heard a noise around behind some goods at the back of the store and I took out a quarter and knocked on the glass showcase with it. Somebody said 'Be there in a minute,' and in about five more minutes the boss of that store came out with a pen in one hand and stood there waiting for me to say that I wanted something. He didn't even say 'good day' or anything else. He just stood and waited. I stood and waited too. What's the good of helping a man out when he hasn't ambition enough to play his own end of his own game?

"Finally he said, and he said it snappy too, as if he was mad because I hadn't offered to buy something, 'Something you wanted?' I said I guessed there was but that I'd forgotten now what, and I turned around and walked out. I

don't believe he cared very much. He must have had something pretty important on his mind."

"I know who that was," said Barlow. "It was T. J. Rogers. He thinks he's writing a novel and he gets behind his back counter there and writes away for all he's worth. He gets mad if anyone goes into the store when there isn't a clerk there to wait on them. I went in one day and got just about what you got."

"Oh, well," said Tobias, as he tried to get an olive out of the stock bottle of them, "if that's the trouble, of course you can't blame him. He's an author, is he? Well, you can't be an author and a grocer too. He may turn out to be a good author for he certainly isn't a good grocer.

"His store wouldn't attract anyone to call a second time. Some stores are so interesting that when you go in you begin right off to see things you want to buy, and when you go away, you decide to come in just as soon as you get a little more money to get something you saw there.

"Then some other stores that carry the identical line of goods don't interest you a bit. It's just because they don't take pains with their stock. You've got an interesting looking store and I believe you've got the right idea about dis-

playing your goods. The more goods you show, the more goods you sell. There's no use talking, showing the goods is what sells them."

"That's what everybody says nowadays," remarked Barlow, scowling as the waitress filled his half cup of black coffee up to the brim with cold milk. "I've ordered floor show cases for the whole store and I'm going to get rid of all the old fashioned ones. It costs quite a little money and I won't get it back in a minute, but it will come back and I'm here to stay and might as well plan to have things in the shape that will make the most money in the long run."

"That's good sense," corroborated Mr. Jenkins. "There are too many men start in business and run things as if this was their last year. They forget that they can't make a fortune and retire in one season. They try to get all the juice out of the lemon with one squeeze and of course they fail.

"Probably this store that you're in will be your life business. You aren't going to look for a dependent position in somebody else's store after being your own boss, and as far as location goes, you've got the chance to make just as big a business right here in Hampton, I believe, as you would have in any place. You bought the best store here, if I do say it. and

you're going to get ahead—if you keep your feet on the ground.

"Oh, you'll make plenty of mistakes and some of them I'll tell you about and some I won't, but you'll pull out in the end."

"I'm glad you think so," said the younger man between bites.

"Oh, I'm not throwing any bouquets—"

"Apple-berry-mince-and-lemon-pie-an'-tapioca pudding," said the waitress at a breath.

"Apple for mine," replied Tobias.

"Same here," said Barlow without allowing the girl to repeat the list.

"There's a lot in displaying goods in a store so that when people come in they will always find their attention called to some line of goods that is just wnat they need at that special time. Folks buy twice, yes, ten times as quick, things that are needed right now.

"If it's potato bug time and a man comes in and sees a pile of Paris green stacked up there, he's a good deal more likely to buy than he would be if he saw that same Paris green there a month before the potato bugs were on hand. Of course it would be a fool thing to do to display Paris green after the bugs were gone and the potatoes dug. You wouldn't have a stock of the stuff then anyway, but lots of dealers do

things just as foolish even if it isn't Paris green they do it with.

"It's enough to give a man a fit to see the way they display goods in some stores. They are just too late on everything. They get a good supply of a line ready and out where people can see it just after the best of the demand is past and the other fellow has supplied it. Winter underwear displays in January. Cough drop window in May. Hammocks in September, and so on down the list. If a man is a born storekeeper and onto his job, he won't be a day too late or a day too early on seasonable goods. He'll know just exactly when is the right time, the psychological moment as they tell about. Why, I can tell what kind of a storekeeper a man is and what kind of a store he is running, and whether he is going to succeed or not, just by walking the length of his store and back."

By this time they had finished the pie and lost no time in getting back down-stairs where Tobias insisted upon buying the cigars before they went out on the street.

They were half way to the store before they recurred to the subject of displays and a tumbled window in a shoe store caused Barlow to remark:

"There's a fellow who doesn't make very good use of his opportunities. Look at that window!"

"Yes, I know," answered Tobias. "Some men display goods just as they would show cordwood and some in the same way you find scrap-iron piled. Of course it isn't always the best way to arrange things in rows, but if you make them look as if they were put in promiscuously, you'll have to follow some system in doing it or the result will be a failure.

"There's isn't one merchant in ten that knows how to use the inside of his store to the best advantage in showing goods. They think that a pillar in the middle of the floor is a damage. Why, a good pillar is worth money to any store. Put shelving of some sort around it and make it work. You can hang umbrella stock, or jackets, or half a dozen other kinds of goods on hooks around a pillar. The one thing you can't afford to do it to treat it as a nuisance.

"Then, where there's a jog in the wall, an odd corner or something irregular, you have a chance to make a display of some kind of goods.

"In lots of stores any odd corner is made a receiving station for empty boxes and dust. There isn't any part of a store where the customers can get to it that you can afford to waste. A little money spent in fixtures will often help to get good out of odd corners. A fellow doesn't have much idea of the things he can get in the

way of fixtures unless he looks the matter up in somebody's catalog. They make 'em for all sorts of odd places and uses.

"I was in a store last Christmas time where they made pretty good use of an odd corner. There was a regular little 'cubby hole' of a place where nine storekeepers in ten would have stored something and let it go at that, but this fellow, he'd cleaned out that corner and draped it in some sort of oriental stuff and hung up some fancy looking lanterns that lit it up. Then he put up some little shelves and a narrow counter in front and filled it all up with perfumes and sachets and put a girl in there dressed in fancy costume. She burned joss sticks and gave out perfume samples and sold no end of goods—just sold them and took the money and delivered the stuff right there, no waits for change or anything. That just shows what a little ingenuity will do."

"Say, that scheme was a good one, wasn't it?" exclaimed Barlow enthusiastically. "I'm going to try something like that next Christmas. I wish someone would publish a book of good, practical store schemes like that. I'm not very good at thinking them up, but I like to put them into execution."

"Maybe I'll print one myself when I get a

hankering to be an author," said Tobias with a laugh.

"If you do, I'll buy one," asserted Barlow. "Come on in and sit down a while."

"No," said Tobias, "I can't come in now. I've got to go home and feed the mare. You didn't know I was keeping trotting stock now, did you?"

"No, is that so? I'd like to see what you've got."

"Come up by and by and I'll show you the neatest little wagon house and fixin's that you ever saw."

"Well, maybe to-morrow," said Barlow as he went inside.

SIXTH TALK

Tobias Jenkins was no horse jockey but he did like a good horse and knew a good one when he saw one.

A few days after the last "Talk" he had just taken the mare to the blacksmith to get her sharpened up a little, and sat in the neat little harness room of his wagon house, polishing up the buckles on a new black harness when he heard someone come in the outside door.

"Come in!" he shouted.

In a minute Barlow entered exclaiming:

"Here I am. Produce your trotter. I've come up to see whether you invested your money wisely or not."

"Sorry, my boy, but I haven't got any trotter here."

"What! you haven't sold that wonderful animal, have you?"

"Not on your tintype. When I get a good thing, I know enough to keep it. No, I just took her down to the blacksmith shop. I'm sorry I didn't know you were coming up right along or I'd have waited. Sit down and tell me what you

know," and Tobias relighted his pipe and leaned back.

"That wouldn't take very long today. I don't feel so very wise."

"What's the matter? Things been going wrong down at the store?"

"Oh, nothing of any consequence, only you know how it is some days. Every little thing seems to rub you the wrong way."

"The trouble with you," said the old man, "is that you need a little more fresh air than you're getting. You stick right there in that store and figure on business until your system gets hide-bound. If you'd go up on the pond and skate with the boys an hour every afternoon, you'd soon get to where things wouldn't go wrong and you'd make just as much money and enjoy it twice as much."

"Oh, I do get outdoors," protested Barlow. "I take a walk every day and I do a lot of gymnastics in the morning when I first get up."

"Gymnastic fiddlesticks!" ejaculated Tobias. "You punch at a rubber bag three times, pull a weight up and let it down again and think you're keeping fit. Let me feel your muscle."

Barlow stepped over and put up his arm.

"Well, you don't scare me any. I don't believe you're overtrained. Young man, you need

"A red hot sport at your expense."

oxygen and some real outdoor exercise. If you'll give up fifteen minutes—not seconds—to some good gymnastics every morning, right by an open window, and then take a half an hour, or better, an hour, outdoors in the afternoon, you'll find that you didn't know before what living was.

"Every afternoon get into the sleigh with some farmer who's starting for home and ride out with him about two or three miles and then walk back. Don't walk out and ride back or you'll catch cold. In that way you will have a chance every day to make some one farmer your friend. You have a pretty good idea of getting the farmer's business by advertising, but you don't realize what a valuable thing the personal element is with the farming class.

"I'm a farmer myself. I was born on a farm and all my family are farmers. I come pretty near knowing what sort of people they are and how they like to be treated. If you get a big personal following among those people, your advertising will go just ten times as far with them.

"The farmer used to be a good deal more difficult man to do business with than he is now. He didn't have any money and what he did have came mighty hard. Now he does

business the same as any business man and knows how just about as well. He gets good pay for his goods and he gets it when he sells the goods—not in the sweet by and by when some commission man sees fit to pay him, like they used to get it when I was a boy.

"Farmers get their mail every day and they read the papers and know what is what. They buy a lot of goods by mail too, from concerns a good deal farther away from them than you are."

"Yes, I know those diabolical mail order houses. They just eat the life out of the legitimate business of the country."

"Now, hold on, John, don't go off the handle," cautioned Tobias. "As far as I can see those fellows do business on the square and are just as legitimate as anybody. I'll admit that it's mighty hard for a fellow to see people who ought to be buying from him, and who maybe owe him good money, sending cash off to these fellows for goods he has right in his store, but you can't accuse them of being fakers and you can't abuse your own trade into leaving them alone. You just say nothing about mail order houses.

"Give a little more thought to this personal element idea. Now, right here in the town,

there are plenty of a man's personal friends who don't trade with him, but when a farmer is your personal friend he will go out of his way to trade with you, and more than that, he will take pains to induce others to come to your store.

"Any man likes to trade in a store where they know him. The farmer more than anyone else likes to be able to go into a store and see someone that he can call by name. He likes to visit a little and not be too hurried. The farmer's wife, too, likes to feel at home in a store. She is a little inclined to be bashful. She is pretty sure to keep right on going to the same old place where she knows the people, if they treat her well. Then the farmer's children, they are always bashful and have to be coaxed a good deal, but don't you make the mistake of thinking that any of this bashfulness is ignorance. Not a bit of it. Those bashful children will go home and talk there just as freely as any children about what they saw in town and what the storekeeper said and how he treated them, and if he made them a little present, that will count for a hundred times with them what it would count for with other children.

"You haven't been in business long enough yet to know how soon children grow up. In a few

years you'll be surprised to see how old and independent some of these kids of today have got to be. Children remember where they are treated well and they go back there and keep going there as they grow up and after they grow up.

"You can't go around feeling a little above the farmer without his finding it out. There's no money in feeling above other folks, even if you are above them. Farmers like a man who's just a plain, common man like they are and don't put on any frills or talk fancy. When you get into the sleigh or the wagon to ride out a ways with one of these men, make it a point to get interested in his affairs. Talk to him about the things he knows about. He will surprise you. You'll learn something you didn't know before.

"Farmers are philosophers and they have time to think things over more than you or I might have. Their work takes them outdoors and being outdoors makes bigger men than can ever be grown inside.

"You can't patronize a farmer any more than you can anyone else without getting caught at it, and if one of the farmers you might get friendly with should suspect that you were doing it just to boom business, it would be all

over with you right then as far as that man and his friends were concerned.

"Farmers buy a good many things in bigger quantities than the town people do. They are a little farther from the market and they can't step into a grocery or dry goods store whenever they want some little thing. They have to carry a stock on hand. There isn't as much of the penny kind of trade from the farmers. They like to buy cheap, but so does anyone.

"The farmers call for a little different sort of goods from that you sell mostly to town trade. Farmers aren't so much on style and they are more on durability. They don't have to consider looks as much out where they live. They respond more quickly to advertising that tells about cheap goods, but they buy good goods pretty freely when you show them how the good ones are the most economical.

"There's one way that the politicians can give the merchant pointers, and that is in making friends and getting along with people. A good politician never lets anyone get him mad. He never disagrees flat-footed with anyone either. He learns to call everyone by name, and he knows who that man has at home to be asked after. He's a hand shaker.

"Shaking hands is a great customer making

idea. It gets other people besides the farmers, and the merchant who gets out on the floor of the store and shakes hands with his customers every day, even if he is too big a dealer to wait on his customers, is going to be a big winner. No use talking, folks want to see the boss around when they come in. They have a good deal more confidence in what the clerks tell them if the old man is right there.

"Of course a man can't shake hands with everyone who comes into his store, and he can't shake hands with even a fair percent of them if he has much trade, but he can see quite a few people every day without taking much time, and in that way, seeing different ones every day, in the course of a month he will have increased his friendly footing on a personal basis quite a bit."

"You must have taken lots of pains with the farmers, Mr. Jenkins," said Barlow. "They are always telling about what a good man you were to deal with and how they liked to buy at the store when you ran it."

"Well, I just got them on my side by treating them as I've told you," responded the Old Storekeeper. "There's no mystery about it. I've got to go down after the mare now, and if you come along, you'll see what a beauty she is."

"I can't go 'way down there now, Mr. Jenkins,

but I'll be up again. I'll go along with you as far as the corner."

As the two men started down the street they met from time to time between the house and the corner half a dozen farmers' teams and to every one Tobias gave a hearty greeting, calling the driver by first name.

"I see how it's done," said Barlow at last, "but it'll be a good while before I can do it. I'm going to have a try at your plan of getting on the right side of the farmers though. I'll probably get them pretty badly mixed, but I may do myself some good before I get through."

"Oh, you don't have to do it all at once. It's like life. You only have to live one day at a time. Darn few men could live through their troubles if they had to bear them all at once. You keep gaining a little on it and first you know, you've got a string of personal acquaintances as long as the moral law. Well, stick to the plan when you get started, and get started tomorrow. There's nothing gained by waiting in a case like that."

Just at this moment they came to Barlow's corner and with a cordial "Good bye," the Old Storekeeper went on down the street, waving his hand here and there to an acquaintance, or tipping his hat to some farmer's wife passing in a wagon.

SEVENTH TALK

The February thaw lasted but a short time and the first day after it caught cold the Old Storekeeper had occasion to go up to Barlow's and late in the afternoon he started out. As he went down the street he overtook Judge Martin.

"Good afternoon, Judge," said Tobias. "You must have been out of town, haven't you?"

"Yes," said the Judge, a pompous old fellow who felt every bit as important as he was. "I have just returned from presiding over the February term at Hooperstown."

"Anything important this term?" the old Storekeeper asked casually.

"No, nothing of an epoch making nature, nothing. There was a case though that might have proved of interest to you. I think I have understood that you incline to the belief that in the case of embezzlers, the employer is often culpable. Is not that true?"

"Well, Judge," replied Tobias, "I have voiced that sentiment pretty freely in some of

my talks among the business men in town. Why do you ask?"

"I ask for the reason that there was brought before me for trial a young man who had been detected putting his employer's money to private uses. The youth was obviously guilty and though he pleaded otherwise, he was so found by the jury who recommended mercy in sentencing the culprit."

"Judge, I'm glad to hear that. 'Employers' responsibility' has got to be a sort of fad with me. Why, do you know, if I was going to make an eleventh commandment, I believe I'd make it read about like this. 'Thou shalt not tempt thine employee!' "

"Good; excellent!" said the Judge.

"I tell you, Judge, a lot of good sermons could be preached on that text and I'm not sure but that they will be some of these days when the ambition to expose something or somebody gets down to those in the lower walks of commercial life.

"There isn't any question in my mind that the man who leaves his money drawer open to his clerks and turns his back and practically says, 'I'm not looking and I won't miss it,' or the mistress who goes out and leaves her jewels lying where the maid could safely steal them,

are to a large extent to blame for the downfall of the clerk or the maid when the temptation becomes too great to be resisted."

"Assuredly, assuredly," nodded the Judge. "The law will not touch them, but moral sentiment, Mr. Jenkins, moral sentiment is going to operate along that line in the future."

"I hope so, Judge. I know there's a theory that character is strengthened in just such way, by temptation, and there's a theory too that no man is strong who has not been tried mightily in the fire of temptation; but One did teach us to say 'Lead us not into temptation,' and why isn't it a thousand times better never to have been tempted than to have been tempted and sometime have fallen? If character cannot be developed except at the expense of honesty, then I say develop honesty and character will take care of itself."

"Mr. Jenkins, I congratulate you upon the soundness of your logic," said Judge Martin as he turned in at his office door. "Come up sometime and we will talk the matter over further. You interest me very much. Good afternoon."

"Good day, Judge," responded Tobias as he went on down the street, a good deal pleased at the Judge's appreciation of his ideas.

He reached Barlow's just as the latter had returned from an early supper and was settling down in his office chair to enjoy a cigar in the quiet hour that usually comes at that time of day.

"Been pretty busy to-day?" the Old Storekeeper asked after responding to the customary greetings.

"Yes," said Barlow, "we have been busy. We are every day for that matter unless the weather is too bad. Our opening turned out to be a great success. What do you suppose our sales were the first day we were open?"

"Not being any mind reader I can't tell," answered Tobias. I never thought the farming population would be very strong on openings and you would have to depend on them a good deal here. I always found that what the farmers liked best was to have you come out to the wagon and hand up a big cigar and ask what they thought of that new mare their neighbor's been getting. How much did you take in the first day?"

"The sales were four hundred dollars," said Barlow.

"Four hundred dollars!" exclaimed the old gentleman. Why, that's more than I ever took in in two days. I remember the biggest day

I ever had, and I remember it not on that account so much as on account of the fact that the chap who was my head clerk at that time overreached himself that day.

"I knew that it had been a big day, I thought probably the biggest we'd ever had but the cash that night didn't come up to my expectations by a good deal. I'd been smelling a mouse for quite a while, and when I counted up that night I made up my mind I'd have a little talk with that head clerk. I called him into the back room the first thing in the morning and told him that I had suspicions that one of the clerks was taking more money than I had paid him."

"He was a mighty square acting and said it was right that I should speak to him first as he was head clerk and he wanted to assure me that he thanked me for giving him a chance to clear himself of any suspicions that might have entered my mind against him."

"He talked to me that way for half an hour and finally it came over me that instead of my finding out anything about him or what I wanted to know, I was just listening to a little speech that bid fair to last forever. The fellow seemed perfectly honest. He met me more than half way, so much more in fact that he

overreached and made me suspicious. I didn't let on though. I just said 'It's all right, John, I wanted to see what you had to say and see if you had any ideas to offer. I see that I need not worry as far as you are concerned. I hadn't anyway, but I wanted to be on the safe side. Don't speak of this to the other boys and I'll look a little farther.'

"All the same, I had made up my mind not to look up anyone else till I had looked Mr. John up pretty thoroughly.

"I took to looking up the young man's amusements outside of hours. And, by the way, there's no use talking, an employer does have a right to know what his clerks do after the store closes. He has the right for several reasons.

"If your clerk boozes or gambles, he is going to tap your till if he gets a chance. He's got to borrow of somebody and you are right handy. I don't believe you ever knew a man who did either of those things, that didn't get in debt doing them. Well, you don't want a clerk to be taking your money, do you?

"Then there's another side to it too. If your clerk is that sort of a fellow, he will get the reputation for it sooner or later and people will avoid him. He will be drawing the wrong

kind of people to your store and keeping the right kind away. You will be coming in after leaving him there, to find him visiting with a lot of loafers that you wouldn't pay a dollar a week to work for you.

"You'd think that the fact that a clerk was a damage to your store and a leak to your money drawer ought to make an excuse for your noticing what he did after hours, wouldn't you? Well, there's another reason besides that. Every employer is in a way responsible for what his clerks make of themselves. I mean by that that he is responsible if he doesn't do all he can to make men of them—yes, sir, and I believe he is responsible if he doesn't interfere to keep them from going wrong outside of the store as well as inside of it."

"Oh, now, Mr Jenkins," put in Barlow, "you make it too strong. I think a clerk is his own man and has to make or break himself. He can't lay his success or failure to his employer——"

As Barlow said this, the other, who was watching the street, exclaimed:

"There goes Mary Ann past the door now! I've got to go home to supper with her. I'll see you again on this subject. Good bye!" and the Old Storekeeper rushed out after his stylish daughter with the plain name.

A man who finds himself loaded up with a big stock of Irish setters when bull terriers are all the rage, won't do much business."

EIGHTH TALK

At the same hour the next night the Old Storekeeper came in and it was plain from his look that he had come just then with the idea of finding conditions similarly favorable to a continuance of the discussion that he had left so abruptly.

With a cordial greeting, Barlow motioned him to a chair and offered him a cigar and began to talk of the weather, purposely steering away from the subject that he knew was uppermost in Tobias' mind.

The old gentleman however was not to be side-tracked from his purpose, however, and after a few casual monosyllabic replies, opened up with:

"Now, my boy, I don't want you to think for a minute that I was running away from your argument last night. I had to go or I would have stayed to finish it then. I guess I did most of the talking while I was here and I didn't give you much of a chance to air your ideas anyway. Do you mean to say that you think

an employer ought to let his clerks go their own way and he go his with no interest in them except when they are on duty?"

"Yes, I do, Mr. Jenkins. I am not disposed to be quite so cold-blooded as that perhaps, but I don't believe that any proprietor has any business poking around to see what his clerks do after they get away from the store. A clerk has to have some fun and most bosses are sort of old fogies—I don't mean you or myself by that—and wouldn't approve of their clerks doing anything but go to prayer-meeting after leaving the store."

"You're 'way off, my boy. You're 'way off. I suppose it's because it isn't so very long since you were a clerk yourself and probably got called down pretty hard until you think you are going to be a philanthropist and show your clerks that you know how they ought to be treated."

"Well," said Barlow, "that is to a certain extent the idea. I know the man I worked for used to be always butting in when I came down in the morning, and I thought it was none of his business as long as I did what he hired me to do."

"Say," interrupted the Old Storekeeper, "I don't know what the old man used to say to

you. He may have had an offensive way of trying to find out how you spent your time and you ought to have overlooked that, but he certainly had the right to know something about what sort of a fellow he was trusting the handling of his money to. If you hadn't had something to conceal, you wouldn't have kicked so hard on his asking about it. What were you doing those nights, playing a little poker?"

"No, Mr. Jenkins, I was as straight a fellow as I could be. That's on the level, but it just made me mad to have the old cuss butt in in that way."

"There now, don't get so riled up over the mere recollection of it. You forget that you are the boss yourself now. Don't you ever feel that you'd like to know what your clerks are doing after hours? Aren't you interested in making men of them?"

"Yes, I want them to be men, but if they won't be, I can't make them, can I? How can I be responsible for the morals of everybody that works for me? Why, I might have a hundred clerks. Would you have a man spend all his time following up his employes? There wouldn't be time for anything else."

"No, I don't mean it as bad as that. If you have a hundred clerks you will have them divided

into departments and I would expect the head of every department to exercise as much supervision as possible over the employes under him. But in the case of any smaller store, the proprietor himself can watch his clerks and not use up much time doing it. I'll tell you right now," and the old man lowered his voice, "I wouldn't have the set of clerks you have out there or any other set very long without finding out what their reputation was among the fellows they run with. I don't know anything against any of them. Henry Bilow worked for me a long time and he is strictly all right, but you'd better change your ideas and get a line on the antics of the rest of the bunch. It's for your own advantage and what is more important, it's for their advantage too. Any young fellow like that needs someone to watch him and call him down when he gets to feeling his oats too much."

Barlow only smiled without showing any irritation over what he may have thought was interference. That he did not agree was evident. He half changed the subject though by asking Tobias what was the end of the affair with his clerk who had claimed to be so honest.

"Well," said the Old Storekeeper, "when I began to look up the fellow's amusements, I

found that he belonged to what seemed to be the most innocent kind of a club of young fellows who had a room up in the corner of one of the business blocks where they spent their evenings playing musical instruments and cards. There didn't seem any harm in that, particularly when, as I found out, they had a rule posted on the wall forbidding gambling of any sort. I wasn't satisfied though. There was no other clue to follow and I determined to know more about this one. It doesn't matter how I found out about it, but I did find out that in that little back, upstairs corner room about ten clerks in various stores around were in the habit of playing a game of poker that was about what men with three times their salaries could afford to play if they were careful.

"I found this out so that while I was morally certain of it, yet I had nothing that would be real proof if questioned. That was all I wanted though. My real proof that the clerk was taking my money came when after having my talk with him, the sales for a week or so had jumped right up to where they belonged. This not only satisfied me that he was the thief and that I had scared him, but it satisfied me too that the rest of the clerks were honest. I

didn't accuse John of anything, for I knew it would be no use. I just bounced him without a word of explanation and he went without asking a question, and always after that I made my clerks' pleasures my business—to a certain extent."

As the old gentleman said this, he leaned back and puffed at his cigar, evidently waiting for Barlow's opinion.

Barlow did not agree with him. That much was perfectly apparent but all he said was:

"Well, you may be right. You have at least had more years of experience than I have had, but I wouldn't act as a spy on one of my clerks for all the money he could take without my catching him."

"You are young yet and can learn a lot of things," said Tobias. "I don't mean that I think all clerks are dishonest, but if a fellow gets into debt and needs money pretty badly as most young men do at times, it's pretty easy for him to borrow it where it's easy to get, and borrowers are hard enough to collect from when you know they have been borrowing, let alone when you don't know it. I say that it's every employer's business to keep his clerks from putting themselves where they are tempted to borrow dishonestly, and when the employer

doesn't do all he can to that end, he is in a way responsible for his clerk's dishonesty—though, mind you, I don't mean to say that that lessens the clerk's responsibility for the crime one whit."

"That makes a good theory," said Barlow, "but it isn't very practical. I'm going to believe my men are honest till they are proved otherwise. That's the way I'd want to be treated."

"Hope you find your way a good one. I know mine is. I've tried it," said the Old Storekeeper, as he picked up his stick and sauntered along out. "We'll compare experiences again later. Good night."

NINTH TALK

It was a bright, sunshiny afternoon in March when the Old Storekeeper came in again and the store was well filled with customers who were keeping the clerks busy.

Without more than a nod to the boys, Tobias sauntered along till he came to the ribbon case which stood in the middle of the broad aisle between the counters and stopped there to look around. Barlow was not far away selling a bill of canned goods to a hotel keeper and as he looked up from the paper on which he had been figuring their cost, he saw the old gentleman writing his name in the dust on top of the ribbon case.

When the fat hotel man had paid his bill and walked out, the Old Storekeeper strolled back to the grocery counter and sat down on one of the stools with the remark:

"Well, I guess the good old times are all out of date now. Used to be that we spent a lot of time figuring how to buy goods as cheap as we could. Used to be I'd get out on the floor here every morning myself and see that the boys

cleaned things up the way they ought to be cleaned. If they left dust on a case anywhere, they had to come back and take it off. There are a lot more things that we used to do that don't seem to be in style any more."

"Now, Mr. Jenkins," broke in Barlow, "I saw you writing your name up there on top of that case and I see the point all right. I do generally go around and see that the store is properly cleaned, but you see this morning I got to writing advertisements, and——"

"Yes, yes, I know. Advertising seems to be kind o' taking the place of dustin' and everything else. They say it will make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, but I've just got an idea that some of the old fashioned notions weren't so bad after all."

"Oh, of course," said Barlow, "a fellow has to do something beside advertise or he can't make a success of his business. Advertising is only to get trade. You've got to hold it some other way. Advertising won't do that part."

"So you'll admit that advertising has its limitations, will you? I'm sort of surprised at that. I reckoned you made a god of advertising, you correspondence school fellows. From the ads I see in the magazines I judged that advertising could make the old young and the

poor rich, the sick well and the weak strong. I had even thought of taking a course for my rheumatism.

"But speakin' of the way to hold trade after you once get it, it always struck me that there was about as much in the way you treat a customer as there is in the goods you give him. If a man isn't generous people darned soon think he's stingy. You've got to take pains to show 'em that you aren't close or you get the name of being tighter'n the bark on a tree.

"I always advocated the money-back-if-you-want-it scheme pretty strong myself. I've heard lots of merchants say that they didn't believe it was good policy, that you'd get robbed right and left and that you'd have goods dumped back on your hands that you'd have to throw away. I've heard 'em ring in all those old arguments about it, but I did business on that plan all the while I ran a store, and I don't believe I got touched up half a dozen times.

"I do recollect one time when a fellow moved into town from Bloomville and kind o' come it on me. He was a smooth chap if there ever was one, and the first day after he struck the town, he came in to buy a lot of groceries.

"He said he was a new man in town and wanted to trade where he could do the best and

get the best goods. He claimed he'd had a lot of poor groceries put on him where he'd been living and he wanted to buy where he wouldn't get stuck again. I said that we sold our goods on the money-back-if-you-want-it plan.

" 'The what plan?' said he?"

"The money-back-if-you-want-it plan, said I. That means that if you buy goods from us that don't give you satisfaction, we'll give you your money back.

" 'Yes,' said he, kind o' doubtfully, 'I've heard of people doing business that way, but I never knew of anybody getting their money back. I'd like to buy goods of you. I want fifty dollars worth and I've got the money, but I got stuck so bad up there in Bloomville that I hate to take any chances.'

"You don't take any chances here, said I. I'll give you a receipted bill for your goods and write on it right over my signature 'Your money back if you want it.'

" 'I'll take 'em,' said he, and I was such a fool that I did just as I said I would. I wrote under the bill 'Your money back if you want it, Tobias Jenkins.'

"The fellow took the goods and went away, and I didn't think any more about the matter until about a year later when he drifted in one

day, looking pretty seedy and asked to see me. One of the boys brought him back to the desk and he shoved that old bill at me and said:

" 'I'll take the money.'

"I didn't see the point. What money do you want? I asked him.

" 'Why, the money on that bill, fifty dollars. Don't you see it says there that you'll give me my money back?'

"Yes, I said, but weren't the goods satisfactory?

" 'No,' he said, 'they were on the bum and I'll take the money.'

"Well, I said, where are the goods? Bring them back and I'll give you the money. I thought that was a happy idea, for, of course, he didn't have the goods then.

" 'Where are the goods? Does it say anything there about bringing the goods back?' he asked.

"I had to admit that it did not say a word.

" 'Well,' he went on, 'then just pay me the fifty and I'll be going along.'

"Not much, said I. You can't swindle me in that fashion.

" 'All right, I'll see a lawyer about it,' he remarked as he went out.

"I didn't have so very long to wait, for while

I was wondering what would happen, in came the pettifogging lawyer who always took all the cheap cases of the town. I saw then that he had sent the fellow in first just to get my refusal, and that it was all cut and dried.

"The expected happened, and though I refused to pay, I was sued in justice's court and had to settle up."

"Didn't that cure you of the money-back notion?" asked Barlow.

"Not by a jugful!" said the old gentleman. "I was stuck that time easy enough, but doing business on that plan had made enough fifty dollars for me so that I had the money to pay, and though I knew I was being cheated and couldn't help it, I stuck to the scheme and it proved a big winner. The case I told you was a big ad for me, and at the same time made the other merchants fight shy of the scheme. I had the money-back business all to myself as a plan for holding trade. I'll tell you there isn't anything like it. It impresses your generous policy on every man you sell goods to."

"Oh, it's an old story, this advertising 'Your money back if you want it.' Nobody believes it."

"Hold on, Barlow. I didn't say anything about advertising it. You are the fellow with

advertising on the brain. Of course you couldn't use that now for a catch phrase. It's worn out as you say, but see that with every sale your clerks make they give the assurance that the goods are fully guaranteed, and that if they are not satisfactory, you will refund the price paid. Of course there are some goods that you can't guarantee, and they ought never to be sold except with that fact understood by the buyer.

"That of course is only one way of showing that your policy is a generous one, but it's about the best way and it will pay every time."

"Well," said Barlow, "I don't know but you are right. I've thought a good deal about it but rather distrusted it. Still you have had a lot of experience and ought to know. Maybe I'll try it. I'll be up to the house to-night and perhaps we can talk about it a little more."

At this Barlow had to leave to wait on a customer, and the old gentleman moved along out with the half audible remark to himself, "Yes, I expect he'll have a good deal of time to talk to me when he comes up to the house to see Mary Ann. I can just see her face and his too when I walk into the parlor and say that I've come in to talk about that money-back-if-you-want-it scheme."

TENTH TALK

One Thursday evening a week later the Old Storekeeper dropped in at closing up time, just as the boys were pulling down the shades. He made a small purchase, and was about to go out again, when Barlow called to him to come back and sit down.

"I'm not going home yet. Wait a while and have a smoke."

"Don't care if I do," said the old gentleman. "I'm always willing to visit. My wife says I'm the champion visitor of the county. I tell her that the president of a ladies' sewing society hasn't got any call to be talking about champion visitors. How's business?"

"Business is fine," answered Barlow. "I'm going to the city to buy spring goods in a few days. Don't you want to go along?"

"Not on your life," said Tobias. "You don't get me into any such strenuous place as that in many a long month. I've retired from work."

"Well, just keep your eye on things while

I'm gone. The boys are all right, and I wouldn't have them watched, but a fellow feels safer to know that someone is kind of looking after his interests. I'll tell them that if they get puzzled about anything you'll help 'em out."

"All right, as long as you don't lay out any work for me I won't kick. You don't want me to write some advertisements for you, do you?"

"No, I don't believe there'll be any of that to be done while I'll be away, although I've just contracted for doubling the size of my space in all the local papers. I wish Hampton had a daily. These weekly papers are pretty slow getting 'round. I want to advertise every day," complained Barlow.

"It strikes me that you pay a lot of your profit out for advertising. Now, for instance, if it's a fair question, how much did it cost you to advertise that opening?"

"I wouldn't make it public as I know of, but I don't mind telling you that the advertising stood me in two hundred dollars."

"Two hundred dollars! Why, boy, that's more than you made on all the goods you sold during the opening if you count in the cost of selling. How do you expect to make any money that way?"

"Oh, well, a fellow doesn't expect to make

any money out of his opening. It's more to get the people in the way of coming here."

"Um–m–m, I see. Your advertising cost you two hundred dollars and so as to have something good to advertise, you marked a lot of goods at cost. Then you sold several hundred dollars' worth of them and didn't lose a cent on 'em. Then you probably charged the advertising up to general expense, so you calculate you broke even and got a good start. Is that it?"

"Well," said Barlow, "in the main that is the idea."

"I may be sort o' stupid, but I confess I don't just understand this advertising game very well yet. Now, you say you got a whole lot of advertising out of this big opening sale. You must figure that advertising will increase your total profits, and yet your advertising money is taken out of those profits. Then, too, you seem to think that it will increase your profits to sell a whole lot of goods at just what they cost you. I don't see into that.

"You sell those goods at cost to get people to tell their friends about it so that you can sell still more at cost. And folks buy all they want of these goods at cost, and when you get a chance to buy a little cheaper or to boost the

price a little so that you could make a profit, everybody has all they want. That gives you a chance to carry along a good big stock without selling any of it until people begin to want some more. Then they come and find the price is higher, and they think you are robbing them and they go over to Bing's and get what they want and he makes the money. Is that the idea?"

"That," said Barlow, "is the way a good many old fogies look at it."

"Oh, I don't object any to being called an old fogy," said the Old Storekeeper without a trace of the irritation that the other had exhibited. "In fact I rather like it now that I am out of the game. I like to sit back and feel like a two-thirty horse watching a lot of three-minute nags trying to go in 'ten. I never did what they are trying to do, but I did better than they ever will do. My idea of this advertising business, from what I have seen of your schemes, my boy, is that it is a darned good thing—for your customers."

Barlow plainly showed that he was disgusted.

"You haven't seen anything but the beginning of my plans yet," said he. "Just wait till things get going. It's the year as a whole that you want to consider, not one or two or

a dozen days. Advertising pays, and the more you advertise, the more it pays—if you use good sense. That has been demonstrated time and again. I am just following a set of rules that are as sure as the laws of the seasons."

"Maybe, maybe," assented Tobias, dubiously, "but don't forget that there is a law that says that you can't make any money selling things for cost. I tried that myself just once and I know that it's a law that works overtime.

"I bought a lot of those red hot plaid scarfs when they used to wear that sort of thing and paid a dollar a piece for them. Got 'em cheap, too. I had an attack of an idea that was about twenty-five years ahead of the times then. I said to myself, 'I'll have some fun with Jones down the street.' He and I were the two stores in the dry goods business those days—we sold every blamed thing you could think of in any other line too. I decided to sell those scarfs for seventy-five cents each, and charge the loss to expense account.

"I knew that Jones couldn't duplicate 'em for less than one-twenty-five. I decided that I would show folks that I could undersell Jones from 'way back. I piled the scarfs up by the door and hung out a card that said, 'Fine Scarfs, regular $2.00 kind, 75c.' They were

scarfs that were selling for two dollars all right, and I knew that everyone would notice the bargain.

"Then I sat down to wait. Two or three men saw the scarfs and bought them. I had a lot of them and the pile hadn't gone down much by night, but in the evening a lot of fellows, regular customers and friends of Jones came in and got scarfs. I was mighty pleased to be getting their trade, because you know, if you can get a man coming to your store for special things, you'll soon have him coming for the regulars.

"The next morning as I came down to the store past Jones', I saw a pile, not very large, but a pile just the same of scarfs identical to mine out in front of his door and the price on them was 65c.!

"That worried me a little and I put my price down to 60c. I had a great run on the goods that afternoon—all from Jones' customers, too. I went home at night feeling better, and came down the next morning to see Jones' pile was marked 55c., and bigger than the day before. Then I tumbled. Jones was buying my scarfs and underselling me at a loss of only five cents a scarf. I was losing 40c.

"I pulled in my sign and called the sale off.

"Some sort of gambling did the trick."

That was my only experience in selling goods below cost to get a reputation. Always after that I tried to make a profit on everything that went out! I don't know as Bings will be over buying your goods to re-sell, but I'll bet a cent you won't make any money on that kind of business."

"Wait and see," was all the answer that Barlow vouchsafed, as he turned out the lights and the two men went out.

ELEVENTH TALK

The Old Storekeeper was on very friendly terms with all the clerks in Barlow's, and during the proprietor's absence on his spring buying trip, he often dropped in to give them the chance to ask for advice if they wanted it about anything. He was far from caring to watch them with a view to telling Barlow of anything that happened, and they knew that he was not the sort to spy upon them, so they took his frequent bits of bantering advice in the spirit intended and often profited by them.

As he came in one morning, he found one of the boys seated on one end of the counter next the door, in his shirt sleeves.

"Well, well, George," he exclaimed, "had to sell your coat, or been playing Sir Walter Raleigh? Now, suppose a customer should come in and see that Barlow can't afford coats for his clerks? Why, it would ruin his reputation. People would think his business was going to the dogs."

While Tobias was thus rubbing it into George,

the rest of the boys laughed unrestrainedly, there being no customers in the store at the time.

"Now that's all very well for the rest of you to laugh," said the old gentleman, "but I'll tell you right now that this particular coat will fit more than one of you. I've seen two or three of you waiting on customers, ladies at that, with no coat on and it made me pretty tired.

"Any lady who comes into a store is entitled to be treated as a lady and I don't know much about it, but at our house they won't let me eat dinner in my shirt sleeves even when we don't have any company. I judge from that that a gentleman isn't expected to be roaming around in public half dressed, whether the weather is hot or cold.

"Now suppose a lady should start to come in here; I don't see any signs of it now, but suppose a case. There would stand a man in his shirt sleeves, just inside the door. I don't know what the lady'd do unless she was my wife, then she'd probably say 'Excuse me. I thought this was a store,' and go out again.

"You kind of expect that in a barber shop the men will stand around in their shirt sleeves, but it looks wrong in a store. I ran a general

store here for years, and in towns like this you can't expect too much style, at least we didn't until Barlow started in—now we expect most anything—but I never let my clerks wait on customers in their shirt sleeves, and I guess I was right about it too."

The clerks all assented.

"Perhaps you think I'm pretty inclined to butt in where I haven't any business," Tobias went on, "but when a fellow has run a store for thirty or forty years, even if he has sold himself out of all right and title in it, if he continues to hang around, it's hard work for him to keep his mouth shut."

One of the boys suggested that they always liked to hear him "butt in," and if he did jump on them, it did them a lot of good.

The Old Storekeeper smiled, and as no one came in, he went on:

"I'm glad to hear that and I hope the good will last. If I had the bossing of you chaps I'd see that you didn't have any half days like this with your time hanging heavy on your hands. Now I suppose that from behind that counter you can't see a half inch of dust on those top shelves, can you?"

The shelves were Henry Bilow's to care for

and the laugh was on him, but the tables were soon turned, for the Old Storekeeper went on:

"Say, Will, you must think that the customers are all going to come around behind the counter to look into that show case. The goods are all turned with their backs to the front. The trouble with you fellows is that you never get out and look in at the front of these cases to see how they look to the public."

The boys all began to straighten things around and Tobias continued:

"You want to keep changing the goods in the show cases as often as you get a chance. That helps to make folks think you are all the time getting new goods. A show case mighty soon gets mussed up and, say, by the way, what's the matter in that case? I'll just take what you have of that black silk at 38c. a yard. Why, that's yard wide goods and worth a dollar-twenty-five if it's worth a cent."

The man behind the silk counter looked sheepish, and began to inspect his stock, to find that the 38c. a yard price card from some ribbon had got moved to the black silk.

"Now that's a nice thing," said Jenkins, sarcastically. How many women do you suppose have been in here and seen that and gone home to make calculations on how much of

that silk they will need for a dress, and have told their friends that they could get good, yard wide, black silk at Barlow's for 38c. a yard?

"Then when they have the dress all planned and the extra things bought that they could afford to get because they were to buy the silk so low, they come after the silk and find that the price was a mistake! Oh, what a joke it will be for them! How they will laugh and how pleased they will be to find that they have spent a good deal of their money and will have to wait a while before they can have their dress after all! They will feel like sending all their friends here to trade because it is such a cheap place."

The clerk at that counter began to look scared and the Old Storekeeper felt a little sorry for him and apparently relented.

"Now, I don't really expect that any such thing as that will happen because that card probably has been that way but a short time, but what was to hinder it from creating the sensation I described? If I was a clerk behind as good a show case as that one, I would be as pleased with it as a woman with a new baby, and I'd spend more time in taking care of it.

"I would have a price on every bit of goods in it, and I'd have the price fixed so that it would

come out of the case with the goods and go back in with them and not get on something else.

"There's nothing like price cards to sell the goods, but I don't believe I'd want tc sell goods for as small prices as that 38c. would indicate. That beats my scarf experience I was telling the boss about the other day."

The boys begged for the story of the scarfs, and with the March rain beating against the windows the old gentleman repeated it for their benefit.

While he was telling the story, one or two customers came in. A farmer among them bought quite a bill of groceries, and though it took Bill, the clerk who waited on him, about twice as long as it should to put them up, on account of his inability to work rapidly and at the same time to listen to Tobias' story, he finally got them fixed.

As the man went out, Bill joined the group and heard the rest of the tale. After this the Old Storekeeper visited with one or another of them until it stopped raining and he was ready to go home. As he started for the door, he said to Bill:

"Why is it that you charge me for groceries and don't that farmer?"

"What do you mean?" Bill asked.

"Why, you don't charge him anything at all, and I notice that I have to pay for a good many things I get."

Bill began to get red in the face and stammer, and at last the old gentleman stopped him.

"You needn't say a word. I know how it is to forget to charge sales. I don't excuse any man for it, but all the same, the best clerk that ever jumped a counter will do it and do it pretty often. That farmer there I happen to know settles up every four months. Do you suppose he would ever have noticed that you didn't charge those things. Of course it often happens that someone will come in and pay for goods that the clerk forgot to charge. The people who settle every so often don't do that though.

"Why, when a man's busy and customers waiting for him, it's the most natural thing in the world for him to forget to charge a sale. The more anxious he is to hustle and wait on customers, the more apt he is to forget. You might almost say that the better a clerk is, the more money he'll lose his employer, in that way.

"I just positively know of people who had brains enough when I was running this store to take advantage of that very fact. People

who wanted to buy economically would pay me a trifle more for goods if necessary and never pay cash because they knew that they would make more on the things that wouldn't get charged than they'd lose by paying the long price—and as a matter of fact, nowadays, you can't charge a customer who gets hung up any more than the cash man, unless you sell on the instalment plan.

"I don't want any of you fellows to think I'm excusing your forgetting, not for a minute. It's just as much a part of your business to finish a sale up by putting something in the money drawer or on the book as it is to wrap up the parcel.

"Well, I can't be with you always. I'll send my hired man down to sweep down those cobwebs up there before the boss gets home."

With this parting shot the Old Storekeeper went out, leaving them to think over his suggestions.

TWELFTH TALK

The Old Storekeeper did not visit the store immediately after Barlow's return from the city, and as he sat playing a game of cinch with his daughter one evening, there came a sharp ring at the door bell, and as pretty Mary Ann fidgeted around in her chair, the maid announced, "Mr. Barlow," who followed her into the library where the father and daughter sat.

"Good evening, Miss Jenkins; good evening, Mr. Jenkins," said Barlow, as he advanced to shake hands with the two.

"Why," said the old gentleman, "you back? I supposed you were still sauntering up and down the Tenderloin. Come to think, though, I did sort o' notice this end of town tip up out of water when the train pulled into the other end last night. I guess that was when you stepped off the cars. Mary, why don't you give Mr. Wanamaker the glad hand?"

"Oh, papa, don't be so foolish. You are all the time joking Mr. Barlow. Does he talk to you that way when he comes into the store, Mr. Barlow?"

"No, he's very careful of my feelings down there, Miss Jenkins. We have some good talks and I learn a lot. I set a great value on your father's advice. I only hope that after I've had as many years of experience as he has, I'll know as much."

"But papa says that sometimes you don't agree with him at all. I guess you have some ideas of your own."

"Yes, he certainly has and he isn't a bit afraid to express them," said the father, as he motioned the younger people to seats. "He has one pet notion that we've had some arguments about, that every man is honest."

"Why, papa," broke in Mary, "you surely don't believe in calling every man dishonest until he proves that he isn't, do you? I've heard Joe Donnelly say, and he's a lawyer, that every man is innocent till he's proved guilty."

"Thank you, Miss Jenkins," said Barlow, "I see that you are on my side."

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that," returned the young lady with a toss of the head. "I'm pretty apt to be on papa's side, but I want his side to be right. Isn't that so, daddy?"

"Well, Mary, you see it's like this; I tell John that he can't afford to hire clerks to come

in and handle his money and pay no attention to what kind of fellows they are outside of the store. There isn't a thing to prevent those young men from stealing him blind if they want to, except their sense of honesty, and any chap who has the chance thrown in his face forty times a day to help himself to somebody else's money without getting found out, is pretty apt to see the day when he'll need that money and take it—expecting to pay it back, of course, but all the same, no one is very anxious to lend money on just that security."

"Oh, well, Mr. Barlow's clerks aren't that kind of men. Everybody knows that and there's no use talking about it. I want to know what kind of things you got in the city," and Mary turned to Barlow with the way that women assume when they have settled a discussion in their own mind.

"You see," she went on, "papa says that we have to buy everything here in Hampton because he doesn't believe in buying away from home, and it's pretty hard on mama and me because there isn't any really good dry goods store in the town—that is, I meant—well, there isn't and that's all about it, or at least there wasn't until you took this one from papa. They do say now that you have better things

there, but all the girls send to the city for their clothes, and it makes it so difficult for me to keep up with the rest in styles."

"Now, John, what do you think of that?" the Old Storekeeper asked. "Here, I give that ungrateful girl all the money she asks for to get clothes with and only stipulate that she buy them in Hampton, and she goes back on me like that."

"And I'm certain," said Barlow, "that as far as results go, she makes it appear as if she dressed in the city and the other girls in the country."

"Oh, yes, I know. Of course you men will stand up for one another, but every woman knows that you simply cannot get nice clothes and buy them in a little town like this."

"That opens a chance for me to learn something to my advantage," said Barlow. "Pardon me if I talk shop, but we seem to be drifting that way, and as I'm trying just now to make my store the kind of a store that suits people, women especially, I'd like to have a woman's point of view on what this town needs and will support in the way of a general store. We want to keep just the things in the way of dry goods and groceries that the women want to buy. How can we do it?"

"That's right, John;" said Jenkins, "make her tell you now what the reason is that she wants to shop in a bigger place."

"Well, sir, I *will* tell you. I'm not a storekeeper myself, and I don't pretend to know the reasons why you can or can't do things, but I know what women like and that's all I can go by. The trouble with the stores in this town is that they are about ten years behind the times. They never have any of the little things that you see in all the city stores, little novelties of dress that don't cost much, things that girls are always wanting. That's what makes it fun to shop in a big place. You are all the time coming across little things that you didn't know about, that you want—and here you never see anything new.

"Then the merchants here all buy so much of a kind. If I get a shirt waist pattern, there will be at least eleven more of them because you never get less than a dozen. It's that same way with lots of things.

"And you get such freaky patterns in dress goods. Why don't you get some advice from some woman shopper in the city and then buy what the women are going to want instead of a lot of things that the folks you buy of want to sell?

"And you don't run stores here like city stores. The clerks don't like to be bothered to show goods, and there never is a price on anything. The windows look as if the goods had been piled in them to get them out of the way instead of to show them. I don't mean all this for you, because you have really made a great difference in your store, and I heard a lady say just yesterday that she believed you were going to make a regular city store out of it.

"Mama orders the groceries, so I don't know so much about them, but I've heard her say that she did wish that when she sent for Grogan's shelled peas they wouldn't send her Hogan's, which are nothing but a cheap imitation. She said just this morning that she would give a dollar if someone would start a store where you could go and ask for something and get it, or if they didn't have it, be told so in so many words. She's read these anti-substitution things in the magazine advertisements until she thinks that every merchant is trying to cheat her.

"And then another thing I've heard her talk about lots and lots of times is that she never has any way of knowing how much she ought to owe the grocer. She orders things by telephone or from the boys that come around and of course she can ask then how much they

are, but sometimes they don't know, and sometimes the butter or the cheese will weigh more or less than she ordered, and by the time she gets the groceries into the kitchen, she can't tell anything about what they come to and when the bill comes around, she just has to say it's all right and let it go.

"She has tried to get them to send along with the goods a slip saying how much they are, but the boy always forgets it or says he lost it, so what can she do. Oh, we housekeepers have a hard time of it."

"You housekeepers!" exclaimed her father. "Yes, I expect *you* housekeepers do have a hard time of it. I've noticed how haggard you look from worrying over the meals and kitchen accounts. Well, it's a shame. I'll speak to your mother and see that she doesn't work you so hard any more. I suppose she is out in the kitchen now looking up something for you to do in the morning. I think I'd better go and speak to her before I forget it."

As the old gentleman went out, Barlow said:

"Miss Jenkins, you have enlightened me a great deal, and I thank you for it. I have a number of ideas ready to put into execution, and I have only you to thank for them."

The rest of the evening's talk, however, was not such as properly to enter into these chapters.

THIRTEENTH TALK

It was one of those warm, bright afternoons in spring when everyone feels a little too warm for their clothes, and when everyone who has any housecleaning to do is doing it, and every man who can leave his store is raking up his yard or beginning a garden so as to have something for the late frosts to spoil.

The Old Storekeeper sauntered along down the street and stopped in front of Barlow's store to finish his cigar before going in. One of the clerks stood on the front steps and Tobias said to him:

"Where's Barlow?"

"Home, making garden," replied the clerk.

"Humph!" ejaculated the old gentleman, "'s he going to selling garden truck this summer? Well, I'll just drop in and wait a few minutes. Maybe he'll show up."

He stepped inside and stood by the door a short time when a couple of ladies came along and entered, followed closely by the clerk who had been occupying the steps outside.

The ladies looked around, and as all the clerks

inside seemed to be busy, they turned to go out again when they confronted the clerk who had come in behind them. He greeted them, and they then made known their wants, but the Old Storekeeper who had taken it all in, walked back through the store with an expression of disgust on his face.

Henry Bilow who had just finished waiting on a customer, followed him and found himself the target for that disgust.

"You boys make me awfully tired sometimes. Now look at that fellow standing out there in front exhibiting himself to the girls going by and letting the customers come in and he behind 'em. If I was the boss here, I'll just bet I wouldn't be down at Hank's playing a game of pool and leaving the store to run itself any old way. That clerk wouldn't have been loafing around out there if he hadn't thought the boss was a good ways off. He may not be at Hank's, but I'll bet a dollar against a lima bean that he isn't making garden.

"You know what would have happened—say, by Jing! you know what did happen one day when I came around and found you coming into the store behind a customer, don't you? Well, I may be too particular, but I used to want things done the way I wanted 'em done,

and I never would have my clerks 'tending store out on the sidewalk.

"I say, give a clerk a proper amount of time off and expect him to be Johnny-on-the-spot the rest of the time."

As Mr. Jenkins and Bilow stood by the foot of the stairs leading up to the second story, a farmer came along down carrying a horse blanket that he had bought. He was followed by a clerk who was inquiring with a wide yawn on his face.

"That's all, I suppose?"

The Old Storekeeper looked at the clerk and then at Bilow, and as the farmer said "Yes" and went out by himself, he broke out:

"Well, I'll be hanged! Are you a success at selling goods?"

The clerk said that he guessed he was just average.

"Well, let me tell you something, if you will allow me to have so much to say, if you are average, it doesn't say much for the average. Why, you are half asleep. You yawned in your customer's face—and you couldn't stand it to walk an inch farther with him than you had to. What's the matter? Afraid you wouldn't be able to get back here again?"

"No," said the boy, who was a youngster, and really a pretty good sort. "I went to a

dance last night, and I'm just about all in today. You can't expect a fellow to do a very hard day's work the day after a dance."

"No, that's so, I can't, and if you were working for me, I wouldn't expect you to do any work at all. I'd send you home to rest up. I'd rather have a man out of the way any day than half serving my customers.

"Another thing, I'll give you a lesson in psychology. I never took any correspondence school course in it either. I know from a plain common sense point of view that when you say to a customer, 'What else would you like, Mr. Smith?' you are a great deal more likely to make him stir around in his mind for something he wants than you are if you yawn out, 'That's all, I suppose,' and don't even call the man by name. When you suggest, suggest that he does, rather than that he does not want something else. Catch the point?"

The boy said that he guessed the Old Storekeeper was right.

Just then a clerk who had finished waiting on a woman customer, came along back toward the group, leaving the lady who spent a few minutes looking over her shopping list and then went out, hesitating on the way to notice one or two counter bargains.

"Lots of young fellows go into a store with a notion that from that time the store is half their own.

"Now, that is what I call a downright shame," said the old gentleman. "A woman in the store, wandering around, looking at the goods and no one who cares enough about doing business to offer to wait on her."

"Why, I just waited on her," said her salesman.

"You sold her a few goods that she asked for, and then left her to get herself out as fast as she could. Did you get all her money? Isn't her credit any good? That woman wanted to buy more. Maybe she didn't fully realize it herself, but there were things she would have bought.

"The right sort of a salesman never leaves a customer until the customer leaves him. As long as a customer stays in the store, there is a chance for more business."

"That's right and I agree with you, Mr. Jenkins. I want all you boys to take all this in and profit by it."

This unexpected interruption came from the office, and to the surprise and almost dismay of the clerks, Barlow rose up from behind the railing and looked the group over as he spoke.

"You here?" one or two gasped involuntarily as they tried to think whether they had said anything to make them trouble.

"Yes," responded Barlow. "I came in the back way just before Mr. Jenkins left the front of the store, and I've been listening, eavesdropping ever since. I don't know but I should apologize, but——"

"Not at all," said the Old Storekeeper. "I saw you come in."

This shot placed the proprietor on the defensive, and he turned a little red as he said:

"Well, I really was working in the garden, Mr. Jenkins."

"Yes," said Tobias, "I know it. Mary Ann said you were coming over to help her with her rose bushes."

With this parting shot he went out, leaving them all laughing, except Barlow.

FOURTEENTH TALK

May was drawing along toward its last week when the Old Storekeeper drove up to the store one day with his fast road mare and called for Barlow to come out and take a spin.

"It'll do you good," said Tobias, "to get out and breathe a little pure air."

"All right, I'll come. I've heard a good deal about that little bay of yours there, and I'd like to see if she can really go any."

As Barlow came out to get into the buggy, a man with a G. A. R. button on stopped him and explained that they were raising money to defray the expenses of the Decoration day services, as there had been no appropriation made that year by the town for the purpose. He asked for five dollars.

Barlow hesitated, and finally said:

"Well, I don't know. I suppose it's all right. We have to have the celebration, but it seems to me that they spend more money on it than there's any need of. What do they do with so much money anyway? You say you want to raise two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Oh, they spend it for music. We have to have a band, and we get flowers, and then there are carriages for the lame soldiers and a good many things. The money is spent carefully, and I don't think wasted at all."

"Yes, I suppose so, but there seems to be something every day. It's money for the firemen, or money for the churches, or for the band or for the G. A. R. It keeps a fellow busy getting enough for the charity end of his taxes. I don't see that I can get out of giving you five dollars, but it does seem as if this sort of thing comes pretty often."

"Mr. Barlow, you need not give me one cent if you don't want to. The old soldiers are not in need of charity, and we consider that the observance of Decoration day is more a part of the civilian's duty than of the old soldiers themselves. I'm not asking alms, and really this is not a personal matter with me."

After saying this the veteran moved away, and was about to start on, when Barlow called him back.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Shirley. I didn't mean anything of that sort. I want to help you along. It's every man's duty I suppose, and you just put me down for five dollars on that paper."

"All right, Mr. Barlow. Thank you, sir." said the soldier, stiffly.

Barlow got in with Tobias, and they were whirled away behind the little bay mare. For a block or so neither spoke, then the Old Storekeeper could keep quiet no longer, and exclaimed:

"Say, John, do you treat every man with a subscription paper like that?"

"Why, I don't know," answered the younger man. "I don't like to see them come around. I guess it's a good plan to discourage them as much as possible."

"That's right where your dull, my boy. Do you suppose the man after the money likes his job any better than you like to have him come? Did you ever have a man come in with a paper raising money for his own use?"

"No, I don't know as I ever did."

"No, and you probably won't. Now you've made Mr. Shirley mad, and that means that the whole G. A. R. post here will know what you said and think that you look upon them as a lot of sharks. You can't afford to make people feel that way. If you had saved the five by the means, I could see some sense in it, but you gave him five just the same, and so you got no credit for the contribution because you made it under protest.

"You certainly do fall down the worst in some ways. Let me give you a little piece of advice. When a man comes around with any kind of a subscription paper at all, be polite to him. Ask him to sit down and tell his story. Listen to him without a murmur, and when he's through, make up your mind whether you want to give and how much and tell him. Do it cheerfully, and if you give, say you're glad to help him, sorry it isn't more that you can give.

"If you think you can't give anything, let him down just as easy as you can, and tell him you are sorry, but don't on any account kick and act like a cross child. It's darned seldom you can't give something and be benefited by it, because the man you keep good natured that way will remember it—and then there aren't many of us that can afford to refuse to help 'most anyone that wants help.

"I'm getting to be a regular preacher with all this talking to you, but it's a long time since I've found a chap I could hand out advice to like I can to you without his getting mad about it."

"That's all right, Mr. Jenkins. I guess I'm a good subject for almost all kinds of advice. I've tried to profit all I could by your talks, and I've taken up pretty nearly all your ideas except one."

"I suppose you mean by that that you haven't reached a point yet where you think you are responsible for your clerks' honesty?"

"Yes, that's the only point we seem to differ on."

"Well, you know we all find occasion to change our minds on many questions as we grow older and wiser. I have an idea that on that subject you misunderstand me a little. You know it isn't always possible to draw a sharp, dividing line between honesty and dishonesty. Things come up in a clerk's experience that are not simply questions of taking what does not belong to him, or not taking it. I've had a salesman come in lots of times, and when I was not around offer a clerk a good price to push their particular line of goods to the exclusion of others.

"It might be that that line was the one that we were pushing anyway, and it would seem that in taking that money the clerk was not robbing anyone. Then it might be that the line was one that we did not push, either because we did not care what line we sold, or because we were trying to work off some other line.

"Then there are times when it might be policy for a clerk to hand out cigars at the proprietor's expense to mollify or gain a customer. From that there might be all gradations clear through to the clerks taking the cigars for his friends.

"I believe in impressing employes in the first place with a distinct idea that what is yours is not theirs, and can't be except after the giving of a proper quid pro quo—that's all the Greek I know. Lots of young fellows go into a store with a notion that from then on, all the goods in the store are partly theirs.

"I think it's a good plan for the proprietor to make a practice of charging up to himself all the goods he takes out of the store and insisting that the clerks all do the same. If he puts them all on the same basis with himself, they are more likely to feel the need for being on the square. That will help to save the petty encroachments upon stocks."

"It's too bad about Bing's head clerk," said Barlow. "Did you hear what he did?"

"No," said Jenkins. "I've been away a day or so. What was the trouble?"

"Why he was the most stupid of all embezzlers, if you could call him that. It seems that he has been speculating a little on margins in Wall Street, and started with a bit of money his aunt left him. Not so long ago he lost that money, and to save himself took a couple of hundred dollars that Joe Morton paid to him on store account when he was alone in the store.

He never credited the money, but knew that Morton was good, and the old man wouldn't be dunning him, and thought he soon would have enough to pay it and credit it up then. Of course he lost that too, and the old man got short and went to Morton for some money and the theft was discovered. They took Mr. clerk right up and put him where they can find him when they want him. Serve him right too."

"It's pretty hard on his poor mother though," said Tobias. "Not a cent to support her. I happen to know their circumstances. And I'll tell you one thing that makes me think pretty hard about Bings himself. I didn't know of the clerk's dishonesty, but I did know that the clerk was monkeying with Wall Street and Bings knew it himself, and yet—there was his money ready for the clerk to use any time he wanted it. You can't tell me that Bings wasn't to blame some in that matter. I'll just take you back, and go down and suggest to the old cuss that we do something to help that poor old lady out of her difficulty. Bings can let her boy off scot free if he's a mind to, and I'd do it in his place, and do all I could to get him started right somewhere where he won't have anything but his future in front of him."

"Then you can let me out here, Mr. Jenkins, and I will go to supper before I go back to the store. Much obliged for the ride. The mare's a crackajack. I'll go with you again any time. So long"

FIFTEENTH TALK

"I want a yard of unbleached muslin," said the Old Storekeeper to Henry Bilow, as he came into the store one morning in early June. "I'm going to try a little scheme I've been hatching."

Henry deftly tore off the goods and rolled it up and handed it out to Tobias, taking a dollar and giving him back the change, all in less than a couple of minutes.

"Now that's what I call quick service," said the old gentleman. "If I'd gone into one of your modern department stores, I would have been kept waiting about half an hour for them to tie that little bit of muslin up in a mile and a half of red tape. "Say, John," as he saw Barlow coming toward him, "I hope that with all your improvements here, you won't get so fancy in your methods that you'll adopt some kind of a making change and doing up parcels system that will keep people waiting an hour for their goods and change.

"Downey, over here, has got so complicated that there won't any of my family buy anything there they can get anywhere else be-

cause it takes so everlastingly long to get change. There's so blamed much red tape nowadays in the big department stores that a man hasn't any business trying to buy goods there unless he takes a day off to do it.

"Why in the name of John Rogers doesn't some man with a level head start a department store where every counter will have its own money drawer; where you can go and buy a book or a box of sardines, pay for it, and walk out with no time wasted?

"People in the cities talk about their rapid transit and thousand other time-saving schemes —they've got to save time somewhere to make up for the extra time it takes to buy the necessities of life. You can't begin to get goods at any of those big stores as quickly as you can in any country store.

"That's a great idea, Mr. Jenkins," put in Bilow. "Why don't you write it up and send it to some trade journal?"

"Say, Henry, keep it dark, but I did do that very thing. I wrote that scheme all up in fine style and had Tip Blossom typewrite it for me. Then I sent it to the best dry goods and grocery paper I knew of. I didn't hear anything from it, so I thought sure they must be going to print it. I sent in a subscription be-

cause I wanted to see it when it came out, and after about two months of watching the blamed paper, the article came back and a little printed slip with it that said something about 'Rejection of an article does not necessarily imply lack of merit.'

"You can have that paper the rest of the year, John. It makes me tired to see it come into the house."

"All right, I'll be glad of it. I don't get any trade journals, and I suppose there must be quite a lot of news in them," said Barlow, with a very mild interest.

"You do, do you?" snapped Tobias. "Well, if I'm any judge, you're about what the boys call 'the limit' for a young fellow who claims to be right up to date and who expects to run his store on a modern basis. How do you expect to keep up with the times at all? Probably you take the word of the travelling men for what's what, or when you go to New York you buy whatever they say is 'the thing.' I don't wonder that the women of Hampton find it a poor place to shop.

"Why, when I was running the store, I didn't pretend to have a modern store, but I took and read all the trade papers I could get hold of in the dry goods or grocery line. If you haven't

had any of them, you haven't much idea what they would be worth to you, but they will make the difference between buying in the dark and in the light.

"No man who does any business at all can afford to get along without them. You want to subscribe for three or four, and read them right through from cover to cover. You will find that about half your stock is either out of date or was bought at too high prices. The trade papers all believe in advertising, and they give you lots of good hints about how to do it, but, by jing! they don't believe that advertising is all there is to running a business right.

"When a man lives where he can't get out and talk with other fellows in his line and get their ideas and air his own, the next best thing, and it may be just as good, is to read the trade papers. They give you the market reports that you want, and whenever anything new that's really worth having comes along, they tell you about it.

"Of course it's all right to believe the travelling men. They are a good lot of fellows, and they can give any merchant tips if they're a mind to, but you can't depend on them altogether. Lots of merchants make a great mis-

take in the way they treat drummers. They seem to think that they are a bunch of thieves, and that the only way to handle a strange one is to act as if he was trying to steal your overcoat.

"I always gave the drummer a show, and if he was willing to tell his story right off without any extra fireworks, I would soon tell him yes or no and the deal would be closed. Then if there was a chance to visit and I wanted to, we might get right chummy. I believe that a man who comes to me to sell goods has the same right to fair treatment that I expect from the people I'm selling goods to. That doesn't give him the right to use up my time in useless talk though.

"The travelling man may or may not be an evil, but he is certainly necessary. He has been introduced into business methods, and he's there to stay. Make the most you can out of him, for that's what he'll do to you. I don't mean that they aren't a fair lot of men, but, of course, while they look out for their customers, they have got to look out for their employers first. Gee whiz! There's one now. I'll make my escape. So long. Oh, by the way, Henry, Mary said that I was to tell you for her, 'Yes.' I suppose you know what she means."

And the Old Storekeeper went out leaving

Henry in smiles, and Barlow wondering what was the question to which Mary was sending Henry an answering "Yes."

SIXTEENTH TALK

On the occasion of the completion of the sale of the store and its delivery into the hands of Barlow, the Old Storekeeper had taken advantage of the opportunity to give his successor a good bunch of advice on divers and sundry subjects. He had found Barlow rather overconfident, but ready to listen to all sorts of opinions with which he might or might not agree.

The two spent one whole forenoon in talking over store management and methods, and when the talk was ended the younger man had a pretty good idea of the way in which his predecessor had done business, and the older a good insight into what modern methods of merchandising mean, as exploited by a chap with a head full of theory but an utter absence of experience.

The point that the Old Storekeeper emphasized most strongly was the necessity for having the goods. As he put it, "If you don't have the goods, you can't sell 'em."

Said Tobias:

"I built up my business just by having the

goods. I haven't anything against the new ways of doing business and getting it, but I'll tell you right now that there won't any of them amount to much if you don't have what people want to buy and have it when they want to buy it. Lots of stores have gone into the sheriff's hands just because the proprietors didn't know how to keep their stock up.

"Special sales are all right, advertising is a good thing, and big window displays help too, but the first rule in the book is to have the goods. The next rule is to have them at the right time. Right there is where I have got ahead of my competitors more times than one. I don't know that it takes a very long head to know when spring is coming, or when Christmas or Fourth-of-July goods are going to be in demand, but I have noticed that some merchants are always getting in seasonable goods just a little while after the demand begins.

"The first demand for seasonable goods is the best. People want such things when they want them, and they don't want to have to hang around and wait till their neighbors all get them first, either. The man who has the goods ready for the first call makes the first sales, and the people he sells to tell their friends where the goods are to be had; which makes more sales. Then a

dealer soon gets the reputation of either having goods right on time or of having them late. A blind man can see which reputation would be worth money.

"Sometimes it takes nerve to go ahead and buy such a stock of seasonable goods as will supply the demand when it comes. There have been lines of such goods that didn't sell when the time came. You've got to be a judge of whether a certain kind of goods have had their day. Every dog has his day, and the man who finds himself loaded up with a big stock of Irish Setters when Bull Terriers are all the rage won't do much business.

"You say you are going to be a big advertiser. Well, that's all right, but you will find darned soon that even advertising won't make folks buy what they don't want, and it won't make them buy July goods in August—unless July with them is like it was with old Charley McGuire.

"Charley had put in July working for Joe Smith, and Joe hadn't paid him for the work. Charley sued Joe. Sometime afterward, George Youmans asked Charley about the matter. 'Charley,' said he, 'didn't you sue Joe Smith for the pay for thirty-three days' work in the month of July?'

" 'Sure,' said Charley, 'but, begorra, didn't I wor–r–k Sundays?'

"There may be some risk in keeping up a stock of goods that sell because of a fad of the day, but you've got to do it, and just remember that you are getting something more out of having those goods than the mere profit on them. You are getting the reputation for being up to date, and you are selling to every customer for those things goods that they would otherwise have bought of someone else.

"You know how it is yourself. You have some friend you want to patronize. He's a good fellow, and he buys goods from you right along, but when you go to his store for things, he doesn't have them. You either have to take out of date goods or none.

"You are willing to stretch a point to do business with him, and you do it. You take some of his old junk a few times, and then after seeing his competitors' windows full of smart things, just what you want, you drop in there to get a few goods. You buy more than you meant to, and the next time you want something, it isn't so easy to go to your shiftless friend's place. First thing you know, you are buying altogether at the live shop. It isn't your fault. You wanted to patronize your

friend. It was his own fault. He didn't have the goods.

"As a way of getting the other fellow's business away from him, I don't know anything that beats just having the goods.

"Another thing that I've had impressed upon my mind more than once is that people will buy a better class of goods than you think they will. That's a comparatively new discovery of mine, and I haven't stocked up as well on higher grade goods as I would have done if I had not sold out. You see people think of the price of things when they are buying, but they soon forget what an article cost if the quality is good. Then they notice how well it wears and they discover the economy of good goods.

"You've got to have the cheap goods anyway. People want them sometimes, and then if you don't have the cheap ones, it makes it harder to sell the good ones. When you have them both, you can say to a man, 'Here, we've got those cheap ones, and we make more money on them than we do on the good ones. You have to buy lots oftener, but the thing for you to get is this, here. It costs half as much more, but it lasts twice as long, and does twice as good work while it does last.' That's the way

to sell the better goods. You can stand behind a sale of good goods too, but no one wants to guarantee poor stuff.

"You can be just as nice to customers as you want to be. You can put them under obligations to you. You can advertise till you are teetotally broke, and you can talk till you're black in the face, but if you don't have the goods, people are going to go to the store of the man who does have them, and you can't blame them.

"Keep a want book where it's handy for every clerk, and tell them all what it's for. If anybody calls for something you don't have, see that the clerk puts that item down in that book. If you see goods advertised in the papers or magazines in a way that's going to make calls for them, put them down in the want book, and be ready for the first call. Better have down in the book fifty things that you decide it isn't necessary to order than have one thing left out that you ought to get.

"The new goods are where the profits lie. The old standbys that every dealer keeps have the prices all cut to pieces on them. The things that nobody else keeps allow you to make what you please. Times are changing all the while, and I'm not too much of an old fogy to know

that. A fellow can't keep up to date at my age like you young chaps. That's one reason why I'm selling out. I don't want to leave the store. I haven't a thing to do, and I'd like to work here as well as play anywhere else, but it's hard work for me to keep up to date. Well, you needn't laugh. I know that you think that I haven't been bothered keeping any too near it, and probably I'm not your idea of a modern merchant, but you'll find before you have been running this joint many moons that the old man wasn't such a fool after all."

There was much other advice that forenoon, and Barlow took a good deal of it to himself, but was there ever a youngster who would admit that he couldn't give pointers to the old man? As we have seen, Barlow found that he was not too perfect to make mistakes, and as we will see, he continued to make them.

SEVENTEENTH TALK

Old Charley Morrison's drug store was next door to Barlow's, and, such as it was, was the best drug store in Hampton, but Hampton was pretty short on good pharmacies.

Morrison did business in the same way he had done it for forty years, and was satisfied. In spite of his antiquated methods, he did quite a business, for the simple reason that he had the goods, and that goes a long way with customers.

It was the fourth of July, and Barlow's store, like most of the others, was closed, but a drug store of course knows no holidays, and old man Morrison was keeping his open, sitting by the back window with his feet up on his desk and a cigar in his mouth.

He was ruminating in a satisfied mood when the Old Storekeeper dropped in with a genial "Hello, Charley," and helping himself to a cigar out of the case, laid a dime on the glass and walked back to take a seat by the older man who had been his business neighbor for so many years, though not as successful in acquiring a competence.

"Well, Toby," said Morrison, "don't you wish you were back in business again?"

"No, I don't, Charley. I haven't got the hustle in me that I had once. I'll tell you though, if I were back in the store, there are some things I'd do differently."

"Seems to me, Toby, that you did things pretty well before."

"Oh, yes, I know. I made some money, but there's more than that to running a store. And then there's money too that I didn't make. I made a whole lot of mistakes in the way I managed my clerks for one thing, especially at first. I thought I knew it all, just as most young fellows do, and I had to pay the penalty. There are some things that I might have done in the way of protecting my clerks from temptation that would have made men out of several youngsters who turned out to be rascals in spite of all I did do."

"You always had good luck with your clerks, I thought," said Charley.

"As far as people knew, I did. I never told any tales out of school, but say, a man I worked for once when I was younger, used to say that it was a straight road from the unwatched money drawer to the penitentiary for some fellows, and he was everlastingly hammering

into me the fact that his money drawer was watched. I thought he was a crank on the subject. I think now that he wasn't so far off after all.

"You see, in those days there wasn't any very good way of keeping tab on your cash drawer like there is now, and the old man kept us honest by keeping us thinking he was watching us all the while. He had some ideas that seemed a little peculiar then, but I've found out since that a good many people think the way he did. I agree with him now myself in his notions about the responsibility of a merchant for his clerks going wrong."

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Morrison, who had never had any experience with clerks anyway. "A clerk isn't entitled to a guardian any more than his boss."

"Charley," said Tobias, "did you ever hear of that old German proverb that says 'Opportunity makes the thief?' "

"No, I don't know as I ever did. Why?"

"Because if 'opportunity makes the thief,' what about the man that makes the opportunity for the thief? Seems to me that if the thief is guilty, the man who deliberately makes the opportunity for him to steal comes pretty near being guilty too. Oh, I don't for a minute

"There's an old German proverb that says 'Opportunity makes the thief.'"

let off the thief because someone else kept an opportunity before him, but I call the opportunity maker responsible too. He's what Joe Donnelly would call an accessory before the fact, and you know the law deals pretty hard with those chaps sometimes."

"That all sounds like good logic," admitted the druggist.

"It is good logic," Tobias continued, throwing his cigar out of the window as he warmed up to the subject. "I say that there isn't a bit of excuse for the man who doesn't protect his clerks and himself nowadays. If he thinks it's economy to take his chances on the honesty of a young fellow who knows a hundred ways of spending money to his one way of earning it, then it's fair to say if he loses, 'Good enough for him.' That's what I call economy gone wrong."

"I believe you're right, Toby," said Morrison, "I never thought of it in just that light before. That's all."

"That's just what's the matter with thousands of business men to-day. They can't think of anything but themselves. If a clerk steals, they give him a bad name and turn him out and leave him to go on down to the devil. It doesn't occur to them to think 'Could I have

prevented it'? Can I prevent that man's successor from doing as he did?' There's more to morality than simply escaping without violating the laws the blooming legislature makes up there at the capitol."

"That's so, that's so," coincided Morrison. "I don't know as I ever made mistakes in managing my clerks because I haven't had many clerks to manage. My greatest mistake was in not tending to business when I was young. I couldn't seem to settle down to it someway. I had so many outside things—like playing in the band and managing the baseball team, and so on. I couldn't settle down and stay in the store."

"Well, I don't mean to be preaching to you, Doc," said Tobias, "but that's right where lots of men fall down. They can't stick to their work. You knew Jack Blade over in Bloomville? Well, his father set him up in the grocery business when he got out of school. He'd always had an allowance, and never knew what it was to have more than so much money at once. When he got a money drawer of his own, he couldn't stand prosperity. As soon as he found that all he had to do to get money was to help himself, he began to do it every time he went by it.

"It wasn't so very long before he was taking out more than his customers would put in, and he was using most of his time in spending it."

"No doubt about it at all," Charley assented. "It takes a man a long time to get to where his money drawer isn't a temptation to him. I believe that the only way is to begin right at the first to put down every cent that goes out or comes in."

"Of course it is," corroborated Tobias. "You've got to do that or you won't know anything about where you stand. They say that every man has his price. If that's so, he ought not to keep a money drawer shaking that price, even in installment payments, in front of his face all the time."

"You're right and no mistake," said Morrison, as he got up to go out and sell a quarter's worth of cigars to a customer.

While he was making the sale, the Old Storekeeper's daughter walked by with Henry Bilow. When the druggist came back and sat down, he asked with the familiarity of a family friend of long standing:

"Toby, it looks to me as if Bilow there thought more of your daughter than he does of his job."

"Oh, there's nothing in that, Charlie. Mary Ann's just like her mother used to be. She

wants to attach every man she sees, and if she can set two of them by the ears, she is perfectly happy. I guess Bilow knows her too well to fall in love with her. She isn't the kind to tie up to any man till she's had a few years of fun.'

"She's a good girl, and my wife says that when she does make up her mind to marry a man, she'll make him the best kind of a wife."

"They're the kind to marry, Charlie. We know, for we both married girls who had had hundreds of fellows after them. Girls that have a chance to flirt a little before they marry aren't so anxious to flirt afterward."

"Same with men, too, ain't it, Toby?" said Morrison, poking his companion in the ribs.

"At that rate we ought to make model husbands. Isn't that so? Well, I must be going or my wife will think I've eloped. Come up and see us."

"I'll do it. Good bye."

EIGHTEENTH TALK

The day after the "Fourth" was a busy day as days after holidays often are, and when the Old Storekeeper dropped into Barlow's at closing up time, he found the force pretty tired and ready to go home. Barlow himself was cross, and lacked his usual hospitable mood as Tobias came in.

As a matter of fact, Barlow had been cross all day, and had taken particular pains to snap up Bilow on all possible occasions. The rest of the boys had noticed it, and one or two had cautioned Bilow, in a bantering way, to keep away from the boss's girl or he would lose his job.

Henry had taken it all good-naturedly, and had not even lost his temper under the reprimands of his employer. He realized that there very likely might be something in what they were guying him about, and though he had not yet reached a point where he considered himself in love with the bewitching Mary Ann, yet he was interested to an extent that made him unwilling to back down, even when the risk of continuing was counted.

Without appreciating Barlow's grumpy state, the Old Storekeeper took a seat in his office, and ignoring the rather curt "Good evening" which he got, lit up a fresh cigar and leaned back in his chair as if he had come to stay. The boys pulled down the curtains and left, and nothing was said by either of the men as the younger worked vigorously away at his books.

Finally the Old Storekeeper broke the silence.

"John," said he, "I've come in to talk to you about a very important matter."

Barlow felt his heart sink as it used to when he was a boy, and his father would say, "Johnny, I'd like to see you out in the wood-shed." He lost all his gruffness as he asked:

"What is it, Mr. Jenkins?"

"John," the older man replied solemnly, "I've just been reading your last ad in the 'Chronicle,' and it isn't worth a–a–a darn! I'd like to make it stronger, but I don't believe in setting young men a bad example."

To say that Barlow was relieved would be to put it very mildly. He brightened up at once, all his surliness gone.

"Why, what's the matter with it, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Matter? Why, it looks as if they had

tried to run off the paper without getting an impression of your ad on it at all. They must have set it up with type that's been in the hell-box for a year.

"Well," said Barlow, "I guess that was partly my own fault. They didn't seem to have the type and border my copy called for in anything that would print."

"Oh, I see. You get up copy for your ads just as you did those sample ads they made you get up for the Correspondence School Course, and you have an idea that these country news paper offices carry every type and border you found in the specimen sheets the school sent you. Well, you see they don't. If you're going to write ads for the Hampton papers, you will have to go to the office and talk it over with the printer when you take the copy, and have him give you the display type they have that's nearest to what you want. You've gone and learned a whole lot of rules about making up copy that you might as well unlearn just as soon as you can. The first rule about writing ads for your local papers, is to write the kind of ads they can set up."

"You seem to know a good deal about advertising for a man who never would advertise," said Barlow.

"You bet I do," went on the old gentleman, "and I know a good deal more than I've told you too. When I was a boy I worked a year in a printing office, and while I didn't learn a whole lot, I remembered what I did learn. That's the reason they never could get me to advertise in their papers. I'd seen 'em printed, and I knew how many papers there are to the 'thousand circulation.' I never had any trouble standing off the man when he came to get me to advertise. I'd just tell him what I knew, and he would shut right up and go away."

"Don't you suppose the weekly papers here in Hampton have the circulation they claim?"

"No, of course not. What do they claim?"

" 'The Chronicle' says it has three thousand bona fide subscribers. 'The Times' says it goes into four thousand homes, and 'The Democrat' claims that it has double the circulation of all the other papers published in Hampton."

"Tommyrot!" ejaculated the Old Storekeeper. "I go around and visit with the editors of these papers a good deal, and between you and me, the whole three don't mail over ten thousand copies, and probably a quarter of those go beyond the reach of your store."

"What makes 'em lie so about it then?" asked Barlow.

"Oh, the circulation of a newspaper is a fair subject for exaggeration. You or I might call these figures they give you lies, but the publishers call them 'circulation statements' or some other fancy name, and let it go at that. I don't say but that there are publishers who tell the truth about their circulation, but you won't find them on the small papers. If a man is running a paper with a small circulation he can't afford to tell the truth. If he's a Truthful James he'll have to get on a big paper or go out of business. How much do you pay these papers?"

"I pay 'The Chronicle' fourteen cents an inch, and I pay 'The Times'—let's see; I pay them the same price, but they make me a special price as an inducement to take a large space; their regular price is about a fourth more. I pay 'The Democrat' twice as much."

"Yes, and if you were a patent medicine manufacturer a thousand miles away, or a baking powder company, they'd take your ad for about ten per cent less, and allow you ten per cent beside and send you a copy of the paper free. If I were in your place, when it comes time to renew the contract with these papers, I'd have a long confidential visit with the man, and try to get them down a little nearer to

hard pan. I don't pretend to know much about advertising, but I've seen enough of country newspapers to be onto a few things, and I won't charge you a cent for the information either. I wouldn't think of telling you anything about writing ads. You make good ones as far as the writing goes. They are catchy and attract attention. All the women at our house read them and other people do too. They tell something about the goods, and they tell how much they cost, which is the main thing; but you can't learn how to do business with people, either in selling them things or in buying something from them, whether it's advertising space or pig iron, in any way except by experience and you are getting that already."

"No doubt about that," admitted Barlow.

"Experience is the only thing that will teach a young fellow—or an old one either, I guess," said Tobias. "Well, I won't bother you any longer. Good night. Come up sometime."

That the Old Storekeeper's talk set Barlow thinking was evident from the fact that when he was left alone, he immediately proceeded to get down the files of the local papers and look them through. His mind had been diverted from the channels of love; a good thing when a young man's fancy turns to jealousy.

NINETEENTH TALK

The first Friday in August was a very hot one. About the only business in town was being done around Charley Morrison's soda fountain, and the streets were practically deserted.

About the middle of the afternoon the Old Storekeeper walked into Barlow's with a step as jaunty as if the thermometer was not at that very moment standing at ninety-two in the shade. Barlow was sitting in the office with his feet on his desk, smoking a Pittsburgh stogie.

"Times must be pretty good, eh," said Tobias. "The boss sits back in the office with his feet on the desk and a fine Havana perfecto to keep him company. What's been doing this week? People buying goods faster than you can get them?"

"No, not as bad as that," answered Barlow, "but it's been a mighty good week up to today."

"You seem to be taking it pretty easy for a man doing the business you pretend to be doing. How does it happen that I never see you out in front waiting on customers? You aren't getting

too proud for that, are you? Lots of men have made a failure of business just because they got to the private office stage too quick."

"I don't think I could be accused of that," said Barlow, calmly. "I have an idea that in a business of this size there is enough office work to keep one man's time pretty fully occupied, and it would be foolish for him to take his own labor which is worth a good big salary managing his business and put it out there in the store behind the counter where it could not earn more than twelve or fifteen per."

"That's all right," Tobias remarked, "if you're sure your business is big enough to support a manager, but there are mighty few stores in a town of this size that don't call for the boss to take off his coat and do a little manual labor on occasions. The people like awfully well to do business with the high man. The personal element counts for a whole lot in the smaller towns, and the man who gets delusions of grandeur is apt to find the other fellow getting the business.

"Your course in that school probably taught you the whole thing about getting business, but these correspondence school courses are a good deal like what Charley McGuire said about the Bible. He said 'Th' Bible's a great Book,

but I'll tell ye, there's a dale more lift out of it than was ivver put into it.'

"I see you've got a couple of new clerks. How do they seem to take hold?"

"Oh," Barlow answered, "they seem to get on well enough, but they're a little inclined to wait to be told what to do. The fact that there is dust lying around to be wiped up or a show case that needs re-arranging doesn't appeal to them as much as the sporting page of the daily paper."

"No, nor it won't. If you expect an experienced clerk in a store of this kind to be keeping his eye out for something to do between times, you are wasting your expectations. The man who has stayed behind the counter long enough to be 'experienced' is pretty apt to be lacking in ambition. There are exceptional cases, but they don't spoil the rule."

"You don't mean to say, do you, that there aren't any good, ambitious fellows behind the counter?"

"Well, there aren't any too many of them that have been there very long. If a man is really the red hot stuff, he is too good to stay behind the counter as a clerk for very many years.

"I divide clerks into three kinds; the kind

that start right, the kind that end right, and the kind that are never right. Most clerks start right, but deliver me from the chap who is absolutely perfect the first week. What a wonder he is! He can't work hard enough. He has no bad habits. He never smokes, drinks, or swears, and never has. He says that he always goes to Sunday School, and that his mother made him promise he would not go out nights except to prayer meeting. In about three weeks you'll need a detective to watch him. He'll be raising his own wages without saying anything to you about it.

"About ninety-nine clerks in a hundred start in like a new broom. They are too good to be true the first week. You think you've found the long lost ideal. The second week takes the edge off, and with the beginning of the third week the ideal commences to get pretty badly frayed around the edges.

"Then the man who is never right—well, there's this much to be said for him, he starts in wrong, and you know right away where to place him. He makes all kinds of mistakes in change beginning with his first sale. He doesn't think of charging a credit sale until he's forgotten all about it. He puts the money in his pocket when he's away from the money drawer

"He'll be raising his own wages every day without saying anything to you about it."

(and the rest of the clerks) and forgets all about that too. In dress he looks like the last run of shad, and he even smokes in the store. Altogether you aren't likely to keep him very long. If you do, he'll soon be a red hot sport at your expense.

"Then there are cigarette clerks who belong in the 'never right' class. I can spot a cigarette clerk as far as I can see him. His clothes are never neat, and his nails are always dirty. He needs a shave most of the time, and he lets customers go away without a struggle when they don't take the first thing he shows them. He isn't capable of struggling with anything or anybody. Fate has the upper hand of him. He is organized on the wrong plan, and he doesn't give a hang if he is. He'll never be anything but just a cheap cigarette clerk all his life.

"There are other kinds of clerks who are never much good. Some of them think they are going to revolutionize the business, and want to do everything in some freak way. Then there are the fellows who are afraid of earning more than they get, and consequently never earn as much as they get. They watch the clock every minute, and you can depend on it that they won't wait on any more customers at a busy time than they do at any other.

"Another sort won't look at a customer unless they think he will make a big purchase, and some clerks will bring all their friends to loaf in your store. Oh, there's no limit to the kinds of N. G. clerks. Their name is legion, and the longer they stay with you, the worse off you'll be, the worse off'll be your cash account too.

"The clerk that ends right though, he is the star. Don't mind the mistakes he makes at first. When you tell him about them once, he remembers not to make the same ones again. When you catch this rare bird, keep him. Give him every raise he asks for until his salary gets to be as big as your own. If he is the real thing, he won't be asking for a raise he doesn't deserve or can't get from somebody else. He isn't the sort that bluffs you every pay day till you raise his wages to choke him off.

"He'll come down on time in the morning with a fresh collar and a clean shave, go right to work and be ready for the first customer. He'll stand up to the counter and act interested in the people he does business with. He'll be right there till the whistle blows, and won't go off to dinner in a hurry leaving a customer standing around with no one to wait on her. He won't grudge sparing a little of his dinner

hour on occasions, and he won't get mad if he's asked to work a minute overtime. He's the sort of a fellow who can have an afternoon off if he wants it without your feeling that he isn't entitled to it. He's willing to accommodate you, and you are willing to accommodate him. It's too bad there aren't more of him to be had for money."

"I'm not sure that I have any that are all that you say a good one ought to be," said Barlow, "but I've got two or three that I'm satisfied with, and as far as the rest is concerned, they do well enough."

"Yes, I suppose so," continued Tobias, sarcastically. "That's one reason why so many clerks just stay in the rut. Their proprietors are satisfied. They think they do well enough, and won't help them to amount to any more than that.

"There's one thing about clerks that I'd just like you to bear in mind, and that is that the boss often has right in his fist the making or breaking of a good clerk. I've seen a lot of good boys spoiled by the wrong kind of a boss and I've seen several pretty unpromising youngsters brought into the home stretch good and strong by the right sort of a trainer.

"There's the same kind of human nature

in a clerk that there is in anybody else, and it takes the same kind of treatment to get the best out of it. A clerk likes the employer who isn't afraid to hustle packing boxes around a little himself—and a little exercise is a mighty good thing for the proprietor. He likes the employer who is interested in him for more than just what he can get out of him. He likes him to fraternize a little, but no clerk will be improved by too much familiarity. Don't get too far above your clerks, but don't let them lose respect for you. That's about the meat of the matter."

"That's good, sound common sense all right," said Barlow, who had listened with interest to the talk.

As a matter of fact, Barlow would have listened with at least apparent interest to any kind of talk by Mr. Jenkins because he was the father of Mary Ann, and while he had been a little jealous of Bilow, the latter was finding that his employer had the money to do a great many things to make himself more attractive to a girl than a penniless clerk could do.

This condition had made Barlow very good natured toward the world, and when the Old Storekeeper started to go, his would-be son-in-law accompanied him, and together they went in to patronize his neighbor's soda fountain.

TWENTIETH TALK

A week or so after the occasion of the last visit of the Old Storekeeper to Barlow's store, he came in one afternoon and invited Barlow to go out into the country with him on a little rent collecting trip that would take all the afternoon. Barlow agreed to go although it was Bilow's afternoon off and they were rather busy.

While the Old Storekeeper was after his horse, an idea entered the mind of Barlow, and with a smile to himself, he took down a box of papers and selecting one, read it through carefully, replacing it in the file just as Jenkins drove up to the door.

As the young man got into the buggy, he announced to the Old Storekeeper,

"You've given me a good many talks and a lot of good advice, and here is where I'm going to get back at you. You are interested in advertising. I know from the way you talk, and this afternoon I'm going to give you a little talk on what I know about advertising. You think my ideas aren't all of them practical. I'll show you that they are."

"That's just what I've been wishing you'd do," said Tobias. "I reckoned that if I kept pumping advice into you, there would come a time when the worm would turn, and I'd get it back with interest. Now let's hear some of your ideas."

"Well, here they are—and if they show weak points anywhere as we go along, I'd like to have you call my attention to them."

Then as the little bay mare began to warm up to her work a bit, Barlow gave his companion some of his opinions on advertising.

"In the first place, it is practically a foregone conclusion that the very best advertising that a retailer can do in ninety-nine cases in a hundred is newspaper advertising. Other kinds are good when you once have the newspaper ads working well, but they are at best supplementary. Your local paper goes to just the people you want to reach, and it goes regularly and frequently. Through it you can reach any and all classes of people.

"It isn't necessary to consider any other medium until the newspaper field is covered, and you are using every paper that has a circulation among the people who are within trading distance of your store."

"I should think," interrupted the Old Store-

keeper, "that a newspaper with say ten thousand circulation of which three thousand went to your possible customers would be a poor advertising proposition because you'd have to pay for seven thousand subscribers who wouldn't be of any use to you."

"Yes, that's so," admitted Barlow. "You've got to consider that in placing advertising. I meant that of course. Then you have to have a regular position in a paper to get good results. You don't want to be on one page one day and another next. Get a position as near top of column, next to reading matter, as you can, and pay whatever is necessary to have your ad put right there every time. People will get into the habit of looking for your ad if it's always in the same place and new every issue.

"Of course if you are going to run the same ad day after day, it doesn't matter where you put it. A good many merchants seem to think that people will read the same old ads time and again when they know they wouldn't read the most exciting news or the most interesting story a second time. Ads have got to be changed every issue or it's money thrown away.

"Then a good many ad writers think that the best ad is the one that will attract the most attention—stop the most eyes on account of

its heading. They write headings that read 'HUNDREDS KILLED by not having our grippe cure on hand, etc.'; or, 'TERRIBLE MASSACRE OF TURKISH towelling and other goods, etc.' Every reader will see such scare headlines the first time and will read them, but the disgust that follows the reading will hurt the advertiser, and will keep the same man from ever reading his ads again.

"There is nothing like good, plain, sensible talk for an ad, and the heading over it ought to bear some relation to the goods advertised. The man who taught me how to advertise quoted to me once the following: 'There's a bit of advice about newspaper advertising, and other advertising too which is best expressed in the terse and slangy paragraph, 'Don't Get Gay.'

"Anyone is foolish to try to write funny ads, or to write ads in poetry. It's just like trying to talk to someone over the counter in poetry or jokes about the goods they are looking at. They would forget all about the goods to wonder what you meant by such queer language. If ads are just ads and nothing else, people will know that they mean business.

"The women have to be considered in about every ad that's written. There aren't many

things bought in any household without their opinions being considered, even when the goods are men's clothes. The women are the money spenders in every family, and they are the advertisement readers. The prices you quote in an ad stick in the women's minds too. I don't think it too much to say that nine ads in ten depend upon women readers for their effect. I don't believe the men have much to say about the buying of household goods anyway."

"You don't appear to have a very high opinion of man's position in the family, sonny. I guess you're about right though. Go on. You're head has more in it than I supposed."

Barlow flushed a little and continued.

"Whoever you advertise to, you've got to put the prices in your ads. Nobody will rush right off and buy goods that are advertised without a price. There won't be much rushing anyway as a rule, but you have to put in the prices or you're wasting good space. That's where I've been getting ahead of my competitors. Since I've been advertising they have increased their space, but they haven't used prices. They seem to be afraid to put those in for fear I'll know what they are selling for. I don't care if they do know my prices as long as the public knows them. Why, I can sell

canned tomatoes at a shilling a can with the price advertised in all the papers when my competitors would keep the same brand on their shelves at ten cents if they advertised them without giving the price."

At this point, the Old Storekeeper reached his destination, and after doing his errand, got into the buggy again and turned the mare's head toward home. As they whirled along at an increased speed, Barlow was about to start about advertising again when they met Bilow, with the finest livery turnout in Hampton and the Old Storekeeper's daughter by his side. Bilow was blossoming out. He had evidently made up his mind that he would try spending money on the girl himself and see if his chances would not improve.

Tobias bowed cordially and Barlow curtly to the smiling pair, and after that not a word was to be had from the latter, although his companion tried to start up the conversation several times. The ride ended in silence, though one of the two seemed more amused than disturbed by the occurrence.

TWENTY-FIRST TALK

The day after the incident of the drive, Barlow took a day off and invited Miss Mary Ann to go with a little party he made up, to Tyler's Lake for a picnic, and when the Old Storekeeper came down street he decided to step in and have a visit with the boys, and incidentally to notice how things went in the absence of the head of the store.

It was late in the forenoon, but he found two of them washing windows. In the old man's mind this was heresy. He had never allowed the boys to wash windows later than eight o'clock, and he didn't hesitate to guy them about it.

"Well, well, well, what's the matter with you fellows anyway? You must have fallen asleep at the switch. How long does it take to wash a window or so?"

" 'Morning, Mr. Jenkins," said the boy called George. "It is pretty late to be doing this but you see this is our busy day."

"Yes, so I judge," returned Tobias, as he noted that there was not a customer in sight. "When the cat's away the mice will play.

How do you expect anyone to get into the store anyway without an umbrella and a pair of arctics? The time to wash windows is before trade begins."

"Mr. Jenkins, you are too hard on us," said George again. "It's all my fault that we are in the midst of this job at this time of day, but when I saw the boss drive off, I said to Pete that we'd just surprise him by having these windows all washed and changed when he came back, and as there didn't seem to be a thing doing, Bilow told us to go ahead. What do you think of our windows lately anyway?"

There was a method in this last question, and though the Old Storekeeper may have seen that he was to be led away from the shortcomings of the clerks into talk of windows and such things, he made no objection to it and replied good naturedly:

"I've seen 'em worse—yes, I've seen 'em a good deal worse. One thing I've noticed about them is that you put prices on everything, and that's all right. Folks like to be able to walk in and say, 'Give me one of those' without having to ask the price. It makes the average man feel about seven feet tall to buy things that way. Women aren't afraid to ask, but men don't like to and are afraid it will be more than they

can pay. Far as I've noticed nobody cares to admit that they can't afford it, no matter what the 'it' is.

"I've noticed that in my own case lots of times. I was going by Bings' the other day There was a picture in one corner of one window. I don't know the first thing about pictures, but I knew that my wife wanted that one. I've heard her speak of it sometime or other. Naturally I wanted to get it for her. I'd have paid a dollar for it, or I'd have paid five dollars, but the darned thing didn't have any price on it, and I didn't know but it might be something rare, or maybe it was just stuck in there for exhibition and wasn't for sale at all. I didn't want to go in after it and not get it. That would have shown my ignorance of pictures. I didn't go in.

"One thing I do take exception to in your window dressing, and that is putting posters and strips right on the glass. Every time you fix up a good window and then paste a poster on the glass, even if it isn't big enough to hide the goods, it spoils the whole thing as far as effect goes, because anyone going by sees only the poster. It catches the eye before it has time to get to the goods behind, and unless the person is interested enough to stop, that poster

is about all they have seen. The window has been dressed up in vain."

"That's too bad," said George, "because they send us lots of nice strips on purpose to put on the glass. I shouldn't think they'd send 'em out if they're a poor thing to be using."

"So far as the people who send them out are concerned, they aren't a poor thing. They are a darned good thing. These people who send them to you want their particular goods advertised, and they don't care whether your window displays are seen or not. If you'll paste their stickers on the glass they are sure to be winners and you can take what's left of the attention attracted. The glass in your windows is to be looked through, not at.

"I don't think you spend enough money on your windows in the way of decorations to make them attractive to the women. Why don't you take some bright red stuff, ribbon and crêpe paper and make up a red window to show off some line of goods that will contrast well with red. Crêpe paper is great. You can do anything with it, and red is the most attractive color you can get. Make the window trimmings so red that there can't be a man, woman or child go by without having a red spot left on their mind. You can make it look rich by

"You see, you want to put in goods that people are thinking of buying."

using ribbon, and ribbon once used isn't used up by any means. Save all the paper and odds and ends used in decorating the windows, using them over and over as long as they're clean and bright.

"You don't have to make a window red to have a color scheme to it. I only mentioned red because it is the best. You can't use one color all the time though. There are a good many good colors. The one you use ought to be brighter in winter than in summer. Summer windows ought to look cool. Light greens or pinks are good summer colors. Yellow is a poor color, because at night it doesn't show any color at all.

"I haven't fixed a window in years, and when I did fix them, we didn't give as much attention to those things as they do now, but I was the boss of every window the boys fixed up for me. I told them what goods to put in and what scheme to follow.

"You see, you want to put in goods that people are thinking of buying, and you want to keep each window down to about one line of goods, or one price goods. The plan is to have everyone who looks into that window go away with one idea in mind, an idea that will stay there long enough to do you some

good. If your window is a hit-or-miss jumble of all kinds of goods at all kinds of prices, a looker may see something of interest if he looks long enough, but you know the majority of people only see your window as they walk right past."

"What do you think of having a live animal in the window to attract attention?" asked George. "Everybody stops to see what's there then."

"Yes, everybody stops all right," said Tobias, "and everybody 'rubbers' at the animal or whatever it is, and then everybody goes away to tell what kind of an animal they have in Barlow's window, but as for the goods there with the animal, nobody will know there were any. The animal and other freak shows are all right to advertise the store in a general way, but as window displays they aren't worth powder to blow 'em up. Window displays I guess are just about like what Barlow told me the other day about newspaper advertising. He said that one thing you had to remember in writing ads was to keep right down to common sense and not get gay.

"I think that if you can put any kind of moving figures in a window, you have the best kind of a window, provided that you make

those figures mean something that will associate them afterward in the minds of the spectators with the goods you were advertising there. Motion attracts attention, and it may attract attention to goods as well as away from them. An ingenious boy can get a good many motion exhibits out of a heavy, strong clock spring.

"I seem to be keeping you fellows from getting these windows finished. I don't believe you will surprise the boss with new displays when he comes back, not unless you get busy before long. Anyway, it's time I was going to dinner. I'll be in to-night to see what you've done to the windows. So long."

TWENTY-SECOND TALK

For some time following the trip of Barlow and Mary Ann to Tyler's Lake, a very pronounced and conspicuous rivalry for the favor of that capricious young lady occupied the attention of the gossips of Hampton, who like the idle women of any town, spent most of their spare time in discussing the personal affairs of other people.

It was obvious that Barlow and his clerk were both in earnest and each determined to succeed, though so far as anyone could see, neither possessed any advantage over the other. Barlow made every effort to appear the same as before in the store with Bilow, and while he would have given a good deal to have bounced him, he knew that it would look as if he thought he was being beaten, and were doing that as a last resort.

Bilow seemed to have struck a gold mine, and spent fully as much money in entertaining the girl as his employer did. It all resulted to the advantage of the young lady, who was kept busy going out with one or the other of her zealous suitors.

The only person who showed any signs of anxiety in the matter was the Old Storekeeper, who was doing his best at home to get his daughter to discourage one or both of the young men.

The most satisfaction that he could obtain however was characteristic of the girl, who said,

"Papa, those two young men get so much pleasure out of my charming society that I can't bear to deprive them of it. Of course they are foolish, but all men are foolish. You're a little foolish yourself, and I've heard mama tell lots of things about your flirting when you were a young man. Now run along and sell your papers. I've got to get ready to go out with Mr. Bilow."

In the face of such talk, how could a man condemn his own daughter?

That afternoon Mr. Jenkins went down to Barlow's with a vague hope in his mind that something might occur to give him an opportunity to talk over the delicate situation with Barlow himself.

He found that gentleman in a mood which was a curious combination of elation and wrath. The Old Storekeeper was welcomed by Barlow who sat in his office with bills of various de-

nominations spread out before him, and a large sheet of paper containing many figures.

"I'm glad you've come," said he. "I am in need of advice, and while perhaps I wouldn't have come to you for it under the circumstances, yet now that you are here, I'll tell you the story."

"What seems to be the matter?" asked the old gentleman. "Have you found buried treasure, or has somebody left you a lot of counterfeit money?"

"Neither. You see these bills here? Well, everyone of them is marked for identification. They are bills that I have marked and put into the money drawer. From the drawer they have all disappeared—you might say paid out as change, but I know better. I have put those in one at a time and watched things. They have disappeared in each case without the corresponding appearance of a bill of larger denominations which might haye been changed and without any money having been taken out for the purpose of buying smaller change. They have been taken out without authority, and with no replacing of an equal sum.

"So far you understand that I put the bills in there for the purpose of catching a thief. I don't need to explain that to you. Well, I

have the bills, or at least this many of them back again. They did not all return through one channel, but have come from various liverymen, merchants, the florists and others.

"The way I got them was by simply dropping into those different places at one time and another, and asking if they had any twos, or fives, or tens they could let me have for a larger bill. This excited no suspicion, and though it was necessary to repeat the experiment several times, it ended with me acquiring these bills that you see."

"Who took them?" asked the Old Storekeeper, abruptly.

"That's the question," replied Barlow.

"You think it was Bilow," said the older man, with characteristic directness.

"Yes, I think it was Bilow. I'm sure it was Bilow. I know the bills left the store while he was here, in every case. I know that I got them back from men to whom he has been paying a good deal of money. I know that he has been spending more money lately than he earned, and yet he has no debts. I've drawn my conclusions. Henry is the guilty man—but I couldn't prove a thing against him by direct evidence."

"You know men have been hung before now

on less evidence of their crime than you have ——"

"Yes, they have," interrupted Barlow, eagerly."

"——and have afterward been found innocent," added Tobias. "What did you want my advice about?"

"Why, I want to know what to do," said Barlow, a little testily.

"Well, my boy, a man is a fool to act hastily in a matter of as much importance as this, and I would be foolish to advise you hastily. I long ago made it a rule never to give advice where it wasn't really needed, and then only after thinking it over for twenty-four hours. The only advice I'd give you now would be to wait that long before doing or deciding to do a thing. Think it over well, and if you like, I'll drop in then and we will compare our ideas after they've had time to ripen."

It was plain to be seen that Barlow, like most young fellows, had no patience with the waiting game, but he was not willing to go ahead unadvised, so not knowing what to do, he finally said:

"All right, I'll wait. You come in to-morrow afternoon at four and we'll decide then what to do."

As Tobias went out a plan formed itself in his mind, and he proceeded at once to its execution.

To say that he was surprised at the downfall of his old clerk would scarcely describe his feeling in the matter. He had been as certain of Bilow's integrity as—well, as certain as many a merchant is of that of some trusted employe whom he has helped up from boyhood to manhood, and upon whose honesty he would stake his life.

Though a sad commentary upon human nature, it is nevertheless a fact that the Pinkerton annals are filled with the details of instances where the services of the force have been called in to discover the thief in cases where money has disappeared while passing through the hands of clerks who were known to be absolutely honest, of whose integrity the employer could not and would not entertain a doubt.

That such trusted employes are so often guilty of embezzlement is due simply to the fact that they are trusted too far. The implicit trust is their temptation.

After leaving Barlow's, the Old Storekeeper went into Morrison's drug store and told his old friend the druggist to keep everybody out of the store while he used the telephone a minute.

Morrison went out on the steps and pulled the door shut and pretended to be fixing the catch.

Tobias called up central, and asked for Parker's store, Bloomville. Getting them promptly, the following conversation ensued, one end of which sounded thus:

"Hello, is this Parker's?"

"This is Tobias Jenkins of Hampton. Have you a place in your store for a clerk?"

"Any kind of a place at all."

"That'll do. I've got a young fellow on my hands who is a first-class salesman, had lots of experience and whom I'll vouch for. I want to get him into a good store where he can work up. He's strictly all right."

"He could begin work Monday."

"You can arrange all that with him. He's a worker, and don't care what he does so long as it's honest."

"All right. Much obliged. If you want to know anything more, write me. Remember. I guarantee the young man's character."

"Good bye."

As the Old Storekeeper rang off, the druggist came in, opening the door again.

"Much obliged, Charley. Just charge the toll up to me."

"What are you doing, Toby; running an employment bureau?"

"No, but just between you and me, Henry Bilow is going to leave Barlow's, and I told him I'd use my influence to get him a position. Don't mention it to anyone."

"I won't breathe a word of it. He hasn't had any quarrel with Barlow, has he?"

"No, not a word. Barlow doesn't even know yet that he's going. Raised the profit on drugs up to eight hundred per cent. yet?"

"No," said Morrison with a laugh. "I guess I'll leave it at seven hundred. Come in again."

As Tobias went out of the drug store, he was surprised to see Bilow coming along with a big bundle on his shoulder.

"Hello! Got a job of delivering?" said the old man in greeting.

"Yes, I'm going clear down to Bob Baxter's with this matting," was the answer.

"I'm going right that way myself, and if you don't mind, I'll ride with you," Tobias said, jokingly.

Bilow's assent was perhaps not as cordial as it might have been, but the two started along together.

They had not gone far before the Old Storekeeper said abruptly:

"Henry, what have you been up to anyway?"

"What do you mean?" the latter asked with astonishment.

"No use, Henry, no use. I'm too keen an old man to think that you can live at the expense you are living nowadays and do it on your salary and not get in debt to anyone. Henry, you're taking some of Barlow's money ——"

"You mean I'm a thief!" Henry exclaimed, angrily.

"That's it, my boy, but there's no use getting mad about it. It's so, isn't it?"

"Who told you? It's a lie!"

"No, it isn't a lie. I wish it was. How did you get into it? I—I—why, Henry, I'd have staked my bottom dollar on you. I can't tell you how disappointed I am. You were the best man I ever had in the store, and I thought about as much of you as I would of a son." The old man's voice broke a little, but as Henry said nothing, he went on. "I've had clerks who were just naturally worthless, and I've had clerks who couldn't say 'no.' I've had clerks who were 'good fellows' and couldn't help spending more than they got. With everyone of them that went wrong, whiskey or gambling did the trick. When they got into trouble, they helped themselves instead of

asking me to help them. I'd help any clerk who asked help, and I'd have helped you. You were too good a man for rum or cards to tempt; you had too much sense. It took a girl to make a fool of you. Henry, you're old enough to know that girls have to flirt. It's a man's business to look out for himself. You can't get a woman just by spending money on her if she's worth having. You have to get that sort of a girl on your merit. I do blame the girl in this case a little bit, but that hasn't anything really to do with your guilt.

"Henry, I counted on you. I swore by you. I vouched for you to John in every particular and I feel almost responsible myself——"

"Mr. Jenkins, don't—don't talk like that. I can't stand it," exclaimed Henry, almost losing control of himself. Nobody is to blame except myself—and the damnable system in that store. If they would only fix it some way so that a fellow wouldn't have the money drawer saying to him all the while, 'Help yourself; help yourself; help yourself. Nobody'll know; nobody'll know.' Why, that has run in my mind night after night and day after day when I was wanting money worse than I can tell you."

"How did you get started in this way, Henry?"

the Old Storekeeper asked, anxious to get the boy to talk freely to him.

"Oh, it began a good while ago. It was the way that Barlow acted about going with Miss Jenkins. He knew that I couldn't afford to do the things for her he'd do, and it made me angry. I just raged at him, at fate, at everybody, at the fiend that suggested helping myself to the money; at my conscience for saying that it was wrong. I was working twice as hard as Barlow was. I knew it and yet he got the money. I asked for a raise and he refused me; said the business wouldn't stand it. I knew better. I resisted and argued with myself until I finally gave in, and raised my own wages. A little wasn't enough. Pretty soon I had to have more; then it got to where I no longer resisted or pretended that I was taking what was rightfully mine. I just stole whenever I wanted it.

"What will they do to me, Mr. Jenkins? Of course Barlow must know it. Will I have to go to state's prison? Couldn't you talk to him for me? Tell him I've made a terrible mistake. Tell him I'll pay it back, every cent. I'll work for nothing till it's paid. It must not get to mother. It would kill her. I'll go and work somewhere else and send him all

"*Yes, sir, Henry, I certainly am disappointed in you.*"

my wages. I'll do anything if mother only needn't know—and Miss Mary."

The boy sank on a horse block by the walk, they were in the outskirts of the village, and letting his bundle drop, buried his face in his hands and his frame shook with sobs and fear.

The Old Storekeeper said nothing for five minutes, and then seeing a couple of people coming, spoke:

"Henry, there are people coming. Brace up, boy. I know about how you feel. This is not going to ruin your life. I'm going back now. You go on with your bundle and return to the store as usual. I don't promise you a thing, remember, but I'll see what can be done."

They stood silent while the passers by got beyond hearing, then Henry, whose eyes were aflame and whose cheeks burned with nervous excitement, exclaimed:

"I don't care for myself, Mr. Jenkins. Truly, I don't, but please see if you can't nelp me. I know you can. Think of mother finding that I'm a thief. Why, she just about worships me. She's brought me up—you know how she looked after me when I was a kid. You told me once that my bringing up was what got me my job with you. She was the proudest woman you ever saw when you said you'd take

me into your store. She thinks you're the greatest merchant in the country. You can help me, Mr. Jenkins, I know you can, and if I get out of this, God help me, I'll never get into a like place again, if I have to refuse to work where I'm going to be tempted so."

After this the two separated and went their different ways and who knows but that the Old Storekeeper's recollection of Henry's mother as he knew her when they used to sit across the aisle from one another in the little old red schoolhouse may have influenced him even before Henry had pleaded for himself?

TWENTY-THIRD TALK

There has been much talk of late about tainted money, but a sort of tainted money that has received little attention is that which the merchant has accumulated at the expense of the ruin of clerks whom he has allowed to be tempted to their downfall.

Thousands of merchants are alive to the fact that their employes cannot handle the money intrusted to them hundreds of times daily by customers without being tempted. Out of every hundred tempted, a certain number are bound to fall.

Other thousands of merchants fail to recognize the existence of this condition, and go on doing business in such a way as spells the downfall every so often of some trusted clerk who needed the money, and first borrowed, and then stole, with an energy and a cunning worthy of a good cause.

What satisfaction can there be in retiring from business with the knowledge that false notions of economy or careless store methods have been the means of putting even a single individual behind the prison bars! Who would

wish a fortune gained by the ruin of one life?

Such talk is not too strong for the case. The clerk proposition is the great question with the average merchant. The merchants admit it. But they themselves are the cause of most of their own trouble.

A day cannot remedy the faults ingrained into humanity, but a general effort to protect clerks from temptation, to influence them for higher aims and better ambitions will result in elevating the average immeasurably in the present, and in building the foundation for a future almost Utopian condition.

When the Old Storekeeper returned home that afternoon after his talk with Henry, he found that his daughter had come and gone. Inquiry of his wife elicited the response:

"She came in from her drive at five and found a letter waiting for her saying that Harry was coming on the six-ten. She's gone to meet him."

"Harry!" exclaimed Tobias. "I didn't know that he was back."

"Neither did Mary. He wasn't expected until the next troop-ship."

It was just four o'clock the next afternoon when the little bay mare trotted down the street

to Barlow's with the Old Storekeeper holding the reins and a straight young fellow in army blue on the seat with him.

They stopped in front of the store, and telling the young man to come back in half an hour, Tobias went in to talk things over with Barlow as he had agreed.

He found the proprietor in his chair apparently waiting for him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Jenkins. You are prompt."

"I don't know of any excuse I could give if I were not. Any man who can't keep his business engagements promptly has no right to be doing business."

"I guess you're right. Have you decided what kind of advice to give me?"

"I've been wondering a good deal," said the Old Storekeeper, what sort of advice you want. I don't care to hand out a lot of good advice only to have it entirely disregarded. Have you found out anything new?"

"No, things stand just as they did yesterday afternoon."

"And you want me to tell you what I would do in your place?"

"If you think that would be the thing that I ought to do."

"Well, in my estimation, the thing for you to do is to bounce Henry without a word of explanation, except to say that you can't afford to keep him."

"And let the scoundrel go without punishment? Not by a damned sight!"

The Old Storekeeper shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, I didn't think you would take to my advice.

"Excuse me," said Barlow, "but that seems to me to be letting a man off pretty easy when he has robbed you of two or three hundred dollars."

"Now, my boy, let me tell you something," said Tobias, sitting up on the edge of his chair. "When you first came in here, I told you that if you persisted in thinking that it was none of your affair what your clerks did outside of hours, you would have trouble on your hands. I told you that the money drawer would be a temptation that some of the clerks would probably yield to.

"You thought you knew more about it than I did. You didn't pay any attention to what your clerks were doing outside of the store—at least not until you had to—you didn't try to put any check on the cash so that you could tell whether you were being robbed or not.

You looked at the whole thing from your own point of view. You were willing to take the chances on being robbed. You wanted them to like to work for you so that they would stay. It wasn't up to you to be looking after the morals of your men. If it wasn't for the matter being so serious, hanged if I wouldn't say 'good enough for you,' and let you figure it out for yourself."

"I don't see it your way at all, Mr. Jenkins. You're pretty hard on a fellow who has been robbed. It's almost adding insult to injury."

"Damn it, sir! Stop thinking so much about yourself. You're not the only party injured in this matter, not by a good deal. All you've lost is a little money. Bilow is losing his reputation, and a reputation isn't so easily got that a man wants to lose one.'

"If a man doesn't want to lose his reputation, then he'd better be honest. That's all I can say."

"That's not much. I think you can say more than that if you try. If you had had the sense of a fellow of your age ought to have, you wouldn't have been trying to get a girl to like you better than someone else just by showing her that you could spend more money on her than the other fellow. I'm inclined to put the blame in this affair

where it belongs and some of it belongs at my house I think. Henry is to blame chiefly, and I haven't any desire to exculpate him, but there isn't a bit of doubt in my mind that you might have prevented the theft very easily.

"Now, according to your own story, the most that you can do to Henry is to ruin his reputation, and that even might get you into trouble."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you admit that your evidence is not enough to convict. You could only discharge him, and tell people that you did it because he stole from you. Suppose he came back at you with a slander suit? You'd have to prove him a thief or settle. Of course that's all talk, but I want you to see that there isn't much else to do but to follow my advice. You tell Henry to go; that you can't afford to keep him. He'll know that you know he's a thief. I'll see him immediately after his discharge and tell him that I hear that he's lost his job. He'll know that I know about it. I'll tell him that I have another for him, one where they want an honest man, and that I've recommended him and agreed to vouch for him, and that he's to take the job whatever it is. He'll understand. It will make a man of a fellow who will simply be driven to

the wall if you do as you'd like to do about it.

"I know of a position I can get for him, and it'll take him away from Hampton and his temptations here. It will save you some embarrassment too. Would you want on your conscience the imprisonment of a man who had become the victim of your business methods—or rather your lack of them? Would you want to be meeting him on the street every day and thinking 'There's the man I made a thief?' "

"No, I don't know as I would," John answered.

"Well, that's what it would amount to. Now, look here, John. It will be lots better for you as well as for Henry if I just get him started right in somewhere else. You see, you are more to blame in this case than you would be in an ordinary case of a dishonest clerk. You might have saved all this trouble if you hadn't been so overbearing about Mary. It wasn't in nature for a man to stand it. A man offers his clerks temptation enough in doing business the way you do without getting them mixed up in any money spending contest over a girl."

"I did my best to keep him out of this, I'm sure," said John.

"Yes, I know. You did and yet you didn't. I saw how it was going all the time, and to be

honest, I suspected the outcome a good while ago. A girl will make more kinds of a fool of a man than anything else will.

"But, the girl part of the matter out of the question, you don't know human nature as well as you might. There isn't very much absolute honesty lying around, not near so much as there ought to be. It's pretty much comparative, and gives in to temptation when the temptation gets strong enough. I believe that one reason why so many clerks go wrong is that lots of them, most of them I guess, begin to work in a store before their characters get their growth. They're green you might say.

"If you take a half-grown boy and put him at work that's too hard for him, you'll spoil his body. If you take a boy and overtax his half-grown moral strength, why won't it ruin that too? Boys get their moral health undermined like that, and when the strain comes some day, they can't stand up under it. I think honesty gets along best when it isn't tampered with. It's no way to make a man honest or to keep him honest to be all the time inviting him to be dishonest. If you want a man to let drink alone, you don't keep leading him up to the bar and asking him to have a drink, do you?

"There are a couple of old saws that you might just bear in mind if you're anxious about the honesty of your clerks. One is that 'A stitch in time saves nine,' and the other says, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' If you want to keep from having any more clerks go back on their consciences, you'd better get busy and see what you can do to take some of the strain off from them.

"The thing just now though is to undo the wrong done to Henry. Here's a chance for you to do the right thing and repair the results of your own carelessness. Will you do it?"

Barlow twisted uneasily in his chair and grew red in the face as his anger waxed hotter. At last however, when the Old Storekeeper had waited patiently for sometime, the younger man regained control of his wrath, and getting up, held out his hand to the old gentleman.

"I'll do it, Mr. Jenkins. You are right. I'll speak to Henry in the morning."

"John, I'm obliged to you," said Tobias, with tears in his eyes. "You are the man I thought you were. I'll see Henry to-morrow when he leaves here. Now, there's my rig out in front. Come out and see a young fellow who's a friend of mine."

The two walked along out to the curb where

the mare stood, tugging uneasily at the reins held by the chap in the blue uniform.

"John," said the Old Storekeeper, "this is Harry Porter, just from the Philippines. He says he's going to take our Mary back with him when he goes. Harry, you've heard us speak of Mr. Barlow."

Though Barlow's heart thumped as if it would burst through its walls, he proved that his sporting blood was good by congratulating Porter warmly and without hesitation, though a depth of feeling too great for words was plainly written upon his face as the other two drove off.

The next forenoon the Old Storekeeper dropped into Charley Morrison's in order to be where he could keep his eye out for Bilow when he left the store. The druggist was kept busy with customers, and his visitor was left largely to himself, and after waiting for perhaps half an hour, he was rewarded by Bilow's appearance with about as dejected an air as a young man could well possess.

As he passed the door, Tobias stepped out and joined him.

"Well, Henry, want to take a little walk with me?"

"I'm ashamed to, Mr. Jenkins."

"Hold up your head, boy," said the old man, encouragingly. "As far as the world knows you are the same Henry Bilow that you have always been. What sort of a talk have you had with John, or hasn't he spoken to you?"

"Yes, he bounced me. I tried to say something. I wanted to confess and tell him that I would pay him every cent as soon as I could save that much money, but he wouldn't let me say a thing. Just paid me up, and told me that he'd found that he couldn't afford to keep me any longer. I would have felt a good deal better if he would have talked it over with me."

"Never mind, I've got things fixed for you in a way. I don't want any thanks for what I've done. Maybe I haven't done it altogether on your account. I've got a place for you over in Bloomville. It may not be much of a place, but you won't be hurt any by beginning at the bottom. You are the right sort, and you'll soon be on your feet again. I want you to make me your banker, and send me money as fast as you can until you've saved enough to pay John what you have taken from him as nearly as you can estimate it."

"I'll do it, Mr. Jenkins, I'll——"

"Wait a minute. Now, this has been your

first offence, and you're getting off pretty easy. A repetition of it would mean state's prison and nobody would help put you there any harder than I would. I have told the man you're going to work for that I would be responsible for you to any extent. You haven't got to think about your past, boy; you're going to begin over again, and you're going to be honest. You won't have the reason for spending money there that you had here. You won't have the same temptations confronting you. The store you're going into is run with a view to cutting out temptation to clerks. Now, I want you to promise me that you will be honest to a hair's breadth."

Henry held out his hand and the Old Storekeeper took it.

"I'll be an honest man, Mr. Jenkins, and I have you to thank for it. I wish that mother could know what you've done for me."

"Not a word, boy, I'll call for you Monday to take you to Bloomville."

"I'll be ready, Mr. Jenkins. Good bye."

Joe Pignata

Edward W. Pignata

1123 Forrestville